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HOME INFLUENCE;

A Tale

FOR

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS.

BY

GRACE AGUILAR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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PART III.

SIN AND SUFFERING.



HOME INFLUENCE.

CHAPTER I.

ADVANCE AND RETROSPECT.

OUR readers must imagine that two years and four months have elapsed since our last visit to the inmates of Oakwood. It was the first week in March that Edward Fortescue (only wanting ten days for the completion of his fourteenth year) quitted a home, which was happier than any he had ever known, to enter the world as a sailor ; and it is the 7th of June, two years later, the day on which Ellen Fortescue completes her fifteenth year, that we recommence our narrative.

Over this interval, however, much as we are anxious to proceed, we must take a brief glance, clearly to understand the aspect of the Oakwood home affairs, which, from the increasing age of the younger members, had undergone some slight change. The greatest and most keenly felt was the departure of Percy and Herbert for college, the October twelvemonth after Edward had gone : the house seemed actually desolate without them. Percy's wild jokes and inexhaustible

spirits, and Herbert's quiet unobtrusive kindness, much as they had always been truly appreciated by their home circle, still scarcely seemed to have been fully felt till the young men were gone; and the old house actually seemed enwrapped in a silence, which it required very determined effort on the part of all who remained in the least degree to dispel.

Our readers who are mothers, and earnest ones, will easily understand the anxious tremblings of Mrs. Hamilton's heart when she parted from her boys for the world; for such, to spirits fresh, boyish, unsophisticated, as they still were, Oxford could not fail to be. For Herbert, indeed, she had neither fear nor doubt;—no sneer, no temptation, no bad example, would affect him, in whom every passing year seemed to increase and deepen those exalted feelings which in his earliest childhood, had “less in them of earth than heaven.” His piety was so real, his faith so fervent, his affections so concentrated in his home and in one other individual, his love and pursuit of study so ardent and unceasing, his one aim to become worthy in heart and mind to serve God as his minister so ever present, that he was effectually guarded even from the world. Percy had none of these feelings to the same extent, save his ardent love for home and its inmates—his mother, above all. He did, indeed, give every promise that the principles so carefully instilled had taken firm root, and would guide his conduct in the world; but Mrs. Hamilton was too humble-minded—too convinced—that every human effort is imperfect, without the sustaining and vitalizing grace of God, to rest in security, as many might have

done, that *because* she had so worked, so prayed, she *must* succeed. She was hopeful, indeed, very hopeful—how could she be otherwise when she beheld his deep, though silent, reverence for sacred things—his constant and increasing respect and love for his father—his devoted affection for herself—his attachment to Herbert, which seemed so strangely yet so beautifully to combine almost reverence for his superior mind and holier spirit, with the caressing protectiveness of an elder for a younger—a stronger for a weaker? There was much in all this to banish anxiety altogether, but not from such a heart as Mrs. Hamilton's; whose very multiplicity of blessings made her often tremble, and led her to the footstool of her God, with a piety as humble, as constant, as fervent, as many believe is the fruit of adversity alone.

Caroline had sufficiently improved as greatly to decrease solicitude on her account; though there was still a want of sufficient humility, a too great proneness to trust implicitly in her own strength, an inclination to prejudice, and a love of admiration, which all made Mrs. Hamilton fear would expose her to some personal sorrow ere they were entirely overcome. To produce eternal good, she might not murmur at temporal suffering; but her fond heart, though it could anticipate it calmly for herself, so shrunk from it, as touching her child, that the nearer approached the period of Caroline's introduction to the gay world, the more painfully anxious she became, and the more gladly would she have retained her in the retirement of Oakwood, where all her better and higher qualities alone had play. But she knew this could not be; and

she could only *trust* that her anxiety would be proved as groundless with Caroline, as every letter from Oxford proved it to be with Percy, and *endeavour* to avert it by never wavering in her watchful and guiding love.

Emmeline, at fifteen, was just the same sportive, happy, innocent child, as she had been at twelve. Her feelings were, indeed, still deeper, her imagination more vivid, her religion more fervid. To her everything was touched with poetry—it mattered not how dull and commonplace it might seem to other people; but Mrs. Hamilton's judicious care had so taught that *Truth* alone was poetry and beauty—the Ideal only loveable when its basis was the Real,—that she was neither romantic nor visionary. Keen as her sensibilities were, even over a work of fiction, they prompted the *deed* and *act* of kindness, not the tear alone. For miles round her father's large domains she was known, loved, so felt as a guardian spirit, that the very sound of her step seemed to promise joy. She actually seemed to live for others—making their pleasures hers; and, withal, so joyous, especially in her own home and at Greville Manor, that even anxiety seemed exorcised when she was near. Before strangers, indeed, she would be shy as a young fawn; though even then natural kindness of heart prompted such kindness of word and manner, as always to excite the wish to see her again.

Edward, in the two years and a quarter which he had been away, had only once occasioned anxiety. Two or three months after he had sailed he wrote home

in the highest terms of a certain Gilbert Harding, one of the senior midshipmen of his ship, from whom he had received kindness upon kindness ; and who, being six or seven years older than himself, he jestingly wrote to his aunt and uncle, must certainly be the very best friend he could have chosen, as he was much too old to lead him into mischief. Why he (Harding) had taken such a fancy to him, Edward could not tell ; but he was so excessively kind, so taught him his duty, and smoothed all the difficulties and disagreeables which, he owned, had at first seemed overwhelming, that he never could be grateful enough. He added, that, though not a general favorite with his immediate messmates, he was very highly esteemed by Sir Edward Manly and his other superior officers, and that the former had much commended him for his kindness to the youngest boy on board, which Edward was. It was very easy to perceive that young Fortescue's susceptible affections had all been not only attracted, but already riveted by this new friend. All the young party at Oakwood rejoiced at it ; Mrs. Hamilton would have done so, also, had she not perceived an anxious expression on her husband's face which alarmed her. He did not, however, make any remark till he had spoken to Mr. Howard, and then imparted to his wife alone, (not choosing to create suspicion in the open hearts of his children,) that this Gilbert Harding, though very young at the time, had been one of the principal actors in the affair which had caused Mr. Howard to dismiss his pupils, as we related in a former

page; that his very youth, for he could scarcely have been more than eleven or twelve, and determined hardihood, so marked natural depravity, that Mr. Howard had had less hope for him than for any of the others. This opinion had been borne out by his after conduct at home; but that the affair had been successfully hushed up by his family, and by immense interest he had been permitted to enter the navy, where, it was said, his youthful errors had been so redeemed, and his courage and conduct altogether had so won him applause, that no farther fears were entertained for him. Mr. Howard alone retained his opinion that the disposition was naturally bad, and doubted the *internal* response to the seeming *outward good*; and he was grieved and anxious beyond measure, when he heard that he was not only on board the same ship as Edward, but already his favorite companion and most trusted friend. His anxiety, of course, extended itself to Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton to such a degree, that at the first moment they would gladly have endeavoured to exchange his ship; but this would have seemed very strange to Sir Edward Manly, who was one of Mr. Hamilton's most valued friends. He had, in fact, actually delayed Edward's becoming a midshipman till Sir Edward could take him in his own ship, and now to place him elsewhere was really impossible; and, after all, though he might be removed from Harding's influence, how could his anxious guardians know all with whom he might be thrown? They were obliged to content themselves with writing earnestly and affectionately to Edward, and

painful as it was to throw a doubt and shade over such youthful confidence and affection, implored him not to trust too implicitly in Harding; that his character had not always been free from stain; that he (Edward) was still so young and so susceptible he might find that he had imbibed principles, and been tempted to wrong almost unconsciously, and suffer from its effects when too late to escape. They wrote as affectionately and indulgently as they could,—Mr. Howard, as well as his aunt and uncle; but still they felt that it certainly did appear cruel to warn a young warm heart to break off the first friendship it had formed; especially as he beheld that friend approved of by his Captain, and looked up to by the crew. And that Edward's reply was somewhat cold, though he did promise caution, and assure them he had not so forgotten the influences and principles of Oakwood as to allow any one to lead him into error, did not surprise them. He never referred to Harding again, except sometimes casually to mention his companionship, or some act which had won him approval; and they really hoped their letters had had at least the effect of putting him on his guard. Sir Edward Manly's own reply to Mr. Hamilton's anxious appeal to him, however, succeeded in quieting their fears: he assured them he had seen nothing in Harding's conduct, since he had been at sea, to render him an unfit companion for any boy; that he had heard of some boyish faults, but it was rather hard he was to suffer from them as a man; and he assured his friends that he would keep a strict look out after young Fortescue, and the first appearance of a change in a character

which, young as he was, he could not help loving, should be inquired into, and the friendship ended by sending Harding to some other ship. So wrote Sir Edward Manly, with the fullest possible intention to perform; and Edward's anxious friends were happy, more especially as letter after letter brought praises of the young sailor from captain, officers, and crew, and his own epistles, though brief, were affectionate and satisfactory.

It was happy for Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, and Mr. Howard, too, that they were ignorant of the multiplicity of great and little things which could not fail to engross the mind of Sir Edward Manly, who was not only Captain of the Prince William, a gallant seventy-four, but commander of the little flotilla which accompanied him, or they could not have rested so secure. Happy for them too, during those years of separation, that they were not perfectly acquainted with Edward's real weakness of character, or of the fearful extent of mischief which the influences of his first twelve years had engendered. Had he remained at Oakwood till nineteen or twenty, it is probable they would have been insensibly conquered, and the impressions of good, which he had appeared so readily to receive, really taken root and guided his after life, but eighteen months could not do this,—as Mrs. Hamilton would have felt, had she known *all* the effect of her sister's ill-judged partiality and indulgence; but this, as we have already mentioned, was concealed from her by the bright, loveable, winning qualities, which alone were uppermost. Our readers, in fact, know more of Edward (if they have at all thought

of his conduct in so frequently allowing his sister to suffer for him) than his aunt, penetrative as she was ; and, therefore, in the events we shall have occasion to relate, we trust that Mrs. Hamilton will not appear an inconsistent character, inasmuch that one in general so successfully observant, should fail in penetration when most needed.

Edward's life at Oakwood had been so very happy, its pleasures and indulgences so innocent, so numerous, that he did not himself know his liability to temptation, from the excessive love of pleasure which his mother's indiscreet indulgence had originally infused. The control which his uncle and Mr. Howard exercised over him, had been so very gentle and forbearing, that he had scarcely ever felt the inclination to exert self-will, and when it so chanced that he had, Ellen had covered his fault, or borne its penalty for him. He thought he had guided himself, when in fact he was guided ; but this could no longer be the case when one of the little world which thronged a first-rate man-of-war. Outward actions were, indeed, under control ; but what captain, the most earnest, most able in the world, could look into and guide the *hearts* of all those committed to his care ? And almost the first action of Edward's unbiassed will was indignantly to tear into shreds, and scatter to the winds and waves, those affectionate and warning letters, and cling the closer to, rest the more confidently on, Harding, for the wrong that he thought he had done him, by allowing his eye even to rest for a moment on such base unfounded aspersions on his name.

When Mrs. Hamilton told Ellen that her letters to her brother, and his to her, should never be subjected to any scrutiny but their own, she acted on a principle which many parents and guardians would consider as high-flown and romantic, and which she herself had most painful reason to regret—the effects, at least, but not the principle itself, for that was based on too refined a feeling to waver, even though she suffered from it. She could not bear, nor could her husband, the system which prevailed in some families of their acquaintance, that their children could neither receive nor write letters to each other, or their intimate friends, without being shown to their seniors. As for opening and reading a letter directed to one of them, before its possessor saw it, as they had seen done, it was, in their estimation, as much dishonour and as mean, as if such a thing had been done to an adult. Perfect confidence in their home they had indeed instilled, and that confidence was never withheld. There was a degree of suspicion attached to a demand always to see what a child had written or received, from which Mrs. Hamilton's pure mind actually shrunk in loathing. In the many months the Grahame family passed in London, Annie and Caroline corresponded without the least restraint : no doubt many would pronounce Mrs. Hamilton very unwise, knowing Annie so well, and trembling for Caroline as she did ; but as she told Miss Harcourt, she had some notions peculiar to herself (they always had the sanction and sympathy of her husband, however), and this was one of them. She was always pleased and interested in all that her children read to

her, either from their own epistles or those they received, and if they wished it, read them herself, but she never asked to do so, and the consequence was, that the most perfect confidence was given.

When Ellen and Edward parted, they were both so young, that Mr. Hamilton had hesitated as to whether his wife was quite justified in the perfect trust with which she treated them, and whether it would not be wiser to overlook their correspondence ; but Mrs. Hamilton so argued that their very youth was their safeguard, that they were all in all to each other, and as such she wished them to feel they were bound by even a closer and fonder tie than that of brother and sister under other circumstances, so won over her husband, that he yielded ; and from the long extracts that Ellen would read of Edward's letters to the family in general, and of her own to her aunt, he was quite satisfied as to the wisdom of his wife's judgment.

For full a year after Edward's departure, Ellen's conduct and general improvement had given her aunt nothing but pleasure ; even Miss Harcourt's and Caroline's prejudice was nearly removed, though, at times, the fancy would steal over both that she was not exactly what she seemed, and that that which was hidden was not exactly that which Mrs. Hamilton believed it ; and this fancy strengthened by a certain indefinable yet *felt* change in Ellen, commencing about thirteen months after she had parted from her brother. Mrs. Hamilton, herself, for some time strove against belief, but at length she could no longer conceal from herself that Ellen *was* becoming reserved again, and fearful, at

times almost shrinking, and sad, as in her childhood. The openness, and almost light-heartedness, which for one brief year had so characterized her, seemed completely but so insensibly to have gone, that Mrs. Hamilton could not satisfy herself as to the time of the commencement, or reason of the change. Her temper, too, became fitful, and altogether, her aunt's anxiety and bewilderment as to her real character returned in full force. Once, when gently questioned as to why her temper was so altered, Ellen confessed, with tears, that she knew it was, but she could not help it, she believed she was not well ; and Mrs. Hamilton called in Mr. Maitland, who said that she really was in a highly nervous state, and required care and quietness, and the less notice that was taken of her momentary irritability or depression the better. Little did the worthy man imagine how his young patient blessed him for those words ; giving a reason for and so allowing the trepidation which paled her cheek, parched her lips, and made her hand so tremble, when she received a letter from her brother, to pass unnoticed.

But change in manner was not all ; almost every second or third month Ellen's allowance of pocket-money (which was unusually liberal, as Mrs. Hamilton wished to accustom her girls, from an early age, to purchase some few articles of dress for themselves, and so learn the value of money) most strangely and mysteriously disappeared. Ellen either could not or would not give any account of it ; and, of course, it not only exposed her to her aunt's most serious displeasure, but inexpressibly heightened not only Mrs. Hamilton's

bewilderment and anxiety, but Miss Harcourt's and Caroline's unspoken prejudice. From the time of Edward's departure, Ellen had never been discovered in or suspected of either uttering or acting an untruth ; but her silence, her apparent determined ignorance of, or resolution not to confess the cause of the incomprehensible disappearance of her allowance, naturally compelled Mrs. Hamilton to revert to the propensity of her childhood, and fear that truthfulness was again deserting her. Her displeasure lasting, of course, the longer, from Ellen's want of openness, and the air of what almost appeared to her anxious yet still affectionate aunt like sullen defiance (in reality, it was almost despair), when spoken to, caused a painful degree of estrangement between them, always, however, giving place to Mrs. Hamilton's usual caressing manner, the moment Ellen seemed really repentant, and her month's expenditure could be properly explained.

For six or eight months before the day on which we recommence our narrative, there had been, however, nothing to complain of in Ellen, except still that unnatural reserve and frequent depression, as if dreading something she knew not what, which, as every other part of her conduct was satisfactory, Mrs. Hamilton tried to comfort herself was physical alone. No reference to the past was ever made : her manner to her niece became the same as usual ; but she could not feel secure as to her character, and, what was most painful, there were times when she was compelled to doubt even Ellen's affection for herself, a thing she had never had the

slightest cause to do even when she was a little inanimate child.

But very few changes had taken place in the Greville and Grahame families. Mrs. Greville's trial continued in unmitigated, if not heightened, bitterness: the example, the companionship of his father had appeared to have blighted every good seed which she had strenuously endeavoured to plant in the bosom of her son. At sixteen he was already an accomplished man of the world, in its most painful sense: he had his own companions, his own haunts; scarcely ever visiting his home, for a reason which, could his poor mother have known it, would have given her some slight gleam of comfort. He could not associate either with her or his sister, without feeling a sort of loathing of himself, a longing to be to them as Percy and Herbert Hamilton were at Oakwood; and not having the moral courage sufficient to break from the control of his father, and the exciting pleasures in which that control initiated him, he shrunk more and more from the only spot in which better feelings were so awakened within him as to give him pain. To deaden this unacknowledged remorse, his manner was rude and unfeeling, so that his very visits, though inexpressibly longed for by his mother, brought only increase of grief.

Mrs. Greville seemed herself so inured to suffering, that she bore up against it without any visible failing of health; struggling against its enervating effects, more perhaps than she was aware of herself, for the sake of one treasure still granted her—her own almost angel

Mary—who, she knew, without her love and constant cheerfulness, must sink beneath such a constant aggravated trial. Yet that very love brought increase of anxiety from more than one cause. As yet there was no change in their manner of living, but Mrs. Greville knew that, from the excesses of her husband and son, there very soon must be. Ruin, poverty, all its fearful ills, stood before her in perspective, and how could Mary's fragile frame and gentle spirit bear up against them? Again and again the question pressed upon her—Did Herbert Hamilton indeed love her child, as every passing year seemed to confirm? and if he did, would—could his parents consent to his union with the child of such a father, the sister of such a brother? There were always long messages to Mary in Herbert's letters to his mother, which Mrs. Hamilton not only delivered herself, but sometimes even put the whole letter in Mary's hand, and at last laughingly said, she really thought they had much better write to each other, as then she should chance to get a letter all to herself, not merely be the medium of a communication between them; and Mary, though she did slightly blush, which she was in the habit of doing for scarcely anything, seemed to think it so perfectly natural, that she merely said if Herbert had time to write to her, she should like it very much, and she would certainly answer him.

“My dear Emmeline, what are you about?” was Mrs. Greville's anxious appeal, the moment they were alone.

“Giving pleasure to two young folks, of whom I am most excessively fond,” was Mrs. Hamilton’s laughing reply. “Don’t look so terrified, my dear Jessie. They love each other as boy and girl now, and if the love should deepen into that of man and woman, why, all I can say is—I would rather have your Mary for my Herbert than any one else I know.”

“She is not only *my* Mary!” answered the poor mother, with such a quivering of the eye and lip, that it checked Mrs. Hamilton’s joyousness at once.

“She is *your* Mary, in all that can make such a character as my Herbert happy,” was her instant reply, with a pressure of Mrs. Greville’s hand, that said far more than her words. “I am not one of those, who like to make matches in anticipation, for man’s best laid schemes are so often overthrown by the most trifling but unforeseen chances, that display a much wiser providence than our greatest wisdom, that I should consider it almost sinful so to do; but never let a thought of suffering cross your mind, dearest Jessie, as to what my husband’s and my own answer will be, if our Herbert should indeed ever wish to choose your Mary as his wife, and, certainly a most important addition, should she wish it too. Our best plan now is to let them follow their own inclinations regarding correspondence. We can, I am sure, trust them both, for what can be a greater proof of my boy’s perfect confidence in my sympathy with his feelings towards her, than to make me his messenger, as he has done, and as he, no doubt, will continue to do, even if he write. I have not the smallest doubt, that he will inclose me his letters to

her unsealed, and I rather think, your Mary will send me her replies in the same unreserved manner."

And she was right. Nor, we think, did the purity and innocence of those letters, so intensely interesting to each other, give place to any other style, even when they chanced to discover that Mrs. Hamilton was utterly ignorant of their contents, except that which they chose to read or impart to her themselves.

But even this assurance on the part of one so loved and trusted as Mrs. Hamilton, could not entirely remove Mrs. Greville's vague anticipations of evil. Mr. Greville always shunned, and declared he hated, the Hamilton family; but as he seemed to entertain the same feeling towards herself and her poor Mary, she tried to comfort herself by the idea that he would never trouble his head about his daughter, or be glad to get her out of his way, especially if she married well. Still anxiety for the future would press upon her; only calmed by her firm unchanging faith in that gracious ever-watchful Providence, who, in spite of her heavy troubles she still tried to trust and serve, would order all things for the best; and it was this, this faith alone, which so supported her, as to permit her to make her child's home and heart almost as happy as if her path had all been smooth.

In the Grahame family a change had taken place, in Master Cecil's being sent to Eton some time before his father had intended; but so many cases of Lady Helen's faulty indolence and ruinous indulgence had come under his notice, that he felt to remove the boy from her influence must be accomplished at any cost. Cecil was

quite delighted, but his mother was so indignant, that she overcame her habitual awe of her husband, sufficiently to vow that she would not live so far from her son, and if he must go to school, she must leave Moorlands. Grahame, with equal positiveness, declared that he would not give up a home endeared to him so long, nor so entirely break off his companionship with his dearest friends. A very stormy dialogue of course took place, and ended by both parties being more resolved to entertain their own opinion. The interposition of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, however, obtained some concession on Grahame's part, and he promised that, if Lady Helen would make Moorlands her home from the middle of July till the end of October, November and December should be spent in the vicinity of Eton, and she should then have six months for London and its attractions. This concession brought back all Lady Helen's smiles, and charmed Annie, though it was a source of real regret to Caroline, who could not help feeling a little pained at her friend's small concern at this long separation from her, but still she loved her; and, as Annie wrote frequently, and when she was at Moorlands never tired of her society, (the eight months of absence giving her so much interesting matter to impart,) Caroline was not only satisfied, but insensible to the utter want of sympathy which Annie manifested in *her* pursuits, *her* pleasures. Mrs. Hamilton often wished that Caroline had chosen one more deserving of her friendship, but she trusted that time and experience would teach her Annie's real character, and so did not feel any anxiety on that score.

There was only one member in Grahame's family, that Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton hoped might bring joy and comfort to their friend, and that was his little Lilla. She was five years younger than Annie, and being much less attractive, seemed almost forgotten, and so was spared the dangerous ordeal of flattery and indulgence to which Annie had been subject ; and from being more violent and less agreeable than Cecil, was not so frequently spoiled by her mother. They feared the poor child would have much to endure from her own temper, Annie's overbearing insolence, and Lady Helen's culpable indolence ; but Mrs. Hamilton hoped when she resided part of the year in London, as she felt she would very soon be called upon to do, to be enabled to rouse Grahame's attention towards his youngest child, and prevail on him to relax in his sternness towards her ; and by taking notice of her continually herself, instil such feelings in her, as would attract her towards her father, and so increase the happiness of both. Every visit of the Grahame family to Moorlands, she resolved to study Lilla well, and try all she could to make one in reality so estimable, as her husband's friend, happy, in one child at least.

It had been Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton's intention to go to London the January after Caroline was seventeen, and give her the advantage of finishing masters, and a partial introduction to the world, by having the best society at home, before she launched into all its exciting pleasures. To return to Oakwood in July or August, and revisit the metropolis the following February or

March for the season, when, as she would be eighteen and a half, she should be fully introduced. Caroline of course anticipated this period with the most intense delight. She was quite satisfied that in her first visit she should study as much as, if not more than, before ; and content and thankful that her mother would allow her to enter so far into society, as always to join dinner or evening parties at home, and go to some of her most intimate friends, when their coteries were very small and friendly, and another eagerly anticipated delight, sometimes go to the opera and the best concerts, and visit all the galleries of art.

To poor Emmeline these anticipations gave no pleasure whatever ; she hated the very thought of leaving Oakwood, firmly convinced that not the most highly intellectual, nor the most delightful social enjoyment in London, could equal the pure delights of Devonshire and home. Ellen seemed too engrossed with her own thoughts to evince a feeling either way, much to her aunt's regret, as her constant quietness and seeming determined repression of her sentiments, rendered her character still more difficult to read.

But a heavy disappointment was preparing for Caroline, in the compelled postponement of her bright anticipations. To understand the causes of which, we must glance back on an event in the Hamilton family, which had occurred some years before its present head was born. In the early part of the reign of George the Third, Arthur Hamilton, the grandfather of our friend, of the same name, had been sent by government to the coast of

Denmark: his estimable character so won him the regard of the reigning sovereign, Christian VII, that on his departure, the royal wish was expressed for his speedy return. On his voyage home, he was wrecked off the Feroe Islands, and rescued from danger and death by the strenuous exertions of the islanders, who entertained him and the crew with the utmost hospitality, till their ship was again sea-worthy. During his involuntary detention, Mr. Hamilton became deeply interested in the Feroese, a people living, it seemed, in the midst of desolation, a cluster of small rocky islets, divided by some hundred miles of stormy sea from their fellows. He made the tour of the islands, and found almost all their inhabitants possessing the same characteristics as those of Samboe, the island off which he had been wrecked; kind, hospitable, honest, temperate, inclined to natural piety, but so perfectly indifferent to the various privations and annoyances of their lot, as to make no effort towards removing them. Travelling either by land or sea was so dangerous and difficult, that in some parishes, the clergyman could only perform service twice a year,* or once every one, two, or three months. The islands in which the clergyman resided, were, Mr. Hamilton observed, in a much higher state of civilization and morality than Samboe and some others, and an earnest desire took possession of him, to do some real service for those who had saved him from danger and treated him so hospitably. He very speedily acquired their

* For this account of Feroe and the Feroese the author is indebted to a 'History of the Islands, by a Resident.'

language, which gave him still more influence. He found also that if their ancient customs and traditions were left undisturbed, they were very easily led, and this discovery strengthened his purpose. His departure was universally regretted; and his promise to return imagined too great a privilege to be believed.

As soon as his political duties in England permitted, Mr. Hamilton revisited Denmark, and was received with such cordiality as to encourage him to make his petition for the improvement of his Majesty's poor subjects of Samboe. It was granted directly; the little island so far made over to him, that he was at liberty to introduce and erect whatever he pleased within it; and Mr. Hamilton, all eagerness for the perfection of his plans, returned with speed to England; obtained the valuable aid of a poor though worthy clergyman, who, with his wife, voluntarily offered to make Samboe their home and assist their benefactor, (for such Mr. Hamilton had long been,) to the very best of their ability. A strong built vessel was easily procured, and a favorable voyage soon transported them to Feroe. The delight of the Samboese at beholding their former guest again, prepossessed Mr. and Mrs. Wilson in their favour, and Mr. Hamilton, before his six months' sojourn with them was over, beheld the island in a fair way of religious and moral improvement. Schools were formed and masters appointed—houses were made more comfortable—women and young children more cared for and employments found, and sufficiently rewarded to encourage persevering labour. Three or four times Mr. Hamilton visited the island again before his death, and

each time he had more reason to be satisfied with the effect of his schemes. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson were perfectly happy. Their son was united to the pretty and excellent daughter of one of the Danish clergymen, and a young family was blooming round them, so that there seemed a fair promise of the ministry of Samboe continuing long in charge of the same family.

Mr. Hamilton, on his deathbed, exacted a promise from his son that he would not permit the island to fall back into its old habits; but that, if required, he would visit it himself. The visit was not required, but Percy Hamilton, (the father of the present possessor of Oakwood,) from respect to his father's memory, made a voyage to Samboe on the demise of the elder Wilson. He found everything flourishing and happy; Frederic Wilson had been received as their pastor and head, with as much joy as their regret for his father would permit; and Mr. Hamilton returned to England, satisfied with himself, and inexpressibly touched by the veneration still entertained in that distant island for his father. The same promise was demanded by him from his son, and Arthur Hamilton had visited Feroe directly after the loss of his parent, and before his engagement with Miss Manvers. He found it in the same satisfactory condition as his predecessors had done, and the letters he regularly received confirmed it; but for the last year and a half he had received no tidings. Frederic Wilson, he knew, was dead, but his last account had told him, his eldest son, who had been educated in Denmark, had been gladly received by the simple

people, and promised fair to be as much loved, and do the same good as his father and grandfather. The silence then was incomprehensible, and Mr. Hamilton had resolved, if another year passed without intelligence, it would be a positive duty to visit it himself.

CHAPTER II.

A LETTER, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

It was the seventh of June, and one of those glorious mornings, when Nature looks lovelier than ever. The windows of the breakfast-room were thrown widely open, and never did the superb trees of Oakwood Park look richer or display a greater variety of green. The flower-garden, on part of which the breakfast-room opened, was actually dazzling with its profusion of brilliant flowers, on which the sun looked down so gloriously; a smooth lawn whose green was a perfect emerald, stretched down from the parterre till it was lost in woody openings, which disclosed the winding river, that, lying as a lake on one side, appeared to sweep round some exquisite scenery on the opposite side, and form another lake, about a mile further. It was Emmeline's favorite view, and she always declared, that it so varied its aspects of loveliness, she was sure, it never looked two mornings exactly alike, and so long would she stand and admire, that her mother often threatened to send her, her breakfast in her own room, where the view, though picturesque, would not so completely turn her attention from the dull realities of life.

There were some letters on the table this morning, so she had a longer time to drink in poetry than usual.

“Who can offer Ellen a more precious birthday-gift than mine?” exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton, playfully holding up a letter, as her niece entered. “I wonder, if Edward remembered how near his sister was to fifteen, and so wrote on the chance of your receiving it on the day itself!”

“Why, Ellen, what a queer effect pleasure has on you! I always notice, you turn quite pale, whenever Edward’s letters are given to you,” interposed Emmeline, looking at her cousin, and laughing. “I am sure, the very hurry I am in to open Percy’s and Herbert’s, must give me a colour, and you are as deliberate as if you did not care about it. I do wish you would not be so cold and quiet.”

“One giddy brain is quite enough in a house,” rejoined her father, in the same mirthful tone, and, looking up from his letter, he called Ellen to him, and kissed her. “I forgot the day of the month, my little girl, but I am not too late, I hope, to say, God bless you, and wish that every year may pass more happily, more usefully, and more prepared for Eternity than the last!”

“I do not think you have forgotten it, my dear Uncle,” replied Ellen, gratefully, (she had not yet opened her brother’s letter;) “for my Aunt says, I am to thank you as well as her for this beautiful birthday-gift,” and she displayed an elegant little gold watch; “indeed, I do not know how to thank you for all your kindness!” she added so earnestly, that tears came to her eyes.

“I will say, as I have heard your Aunt often say,—by

trying to be a little more lively, and unreserved, my dear Ellen; that would prove our kindness and affection made you happy, better than anything; but I am not going to lecture you on your birthday, and with a letter from Edward in your hand," he continued, smiling. "Open it, my dear, I want to know its date; I rather think, my friend Manly's must be written later."

"Nothing in it for me, Ellen?" asked her aunt. "What a lazy boy he has grown!"

"An inclosure for you, Ellen; why, that is as queer as your paleness!" said Emmeline.

"Do let your cousin's paleness alone," interposed Mrs. Hamilton, gaily. "I really cannot perceive she has any less colour than usual, and as for the inclosure, Edward often has something to add at the last moment, and no room to insert it, and so there is nothing remarkable in his using another half sheet."

"Emmeline always creates wonders out of shadows," said Caroline, dryly.

"And you never see anything but dull, coarse, heavy realities," laughed her sister, in reply. "Come, Ellen, tell us something of this idle brother of yours, who promised to write to me every packet, and never does."

Ellen read nearly the whole letter aloud, and it was unusually entertaining, for the ship had been cruising about the last month, and Edward described the various scenes and new places he had visited more lengthily than usual. He anticipated with great glee an engagement with some desperate pirates, whose track they were pursuing.

“Does he mention an engagement?” inquired Mr. Hamilton.

“No, Uncle ; he concludes quite abruptly, saying they had just piped all hands, and he must be off. The direction does not seem his writing.”

“Nor is it ; Sir Edward sealed, directed, and put it up for him in his own to me. They had piped all hands, as he calls it, because the pirate ship was in sight, and an engagement did take place.”

“And Edward—oh Uncle, is he hurt ? I am sure, he is, by your face,” exclaimed Ellen, trembling, and all the little circle looked alarmed.

“Then my face is a deceiver,” replied Mr. Hamilton, quite cheerfully. “He only received a slight flesh wound in his right arm, which prevented his using it to complete his letter, and I rather think, he would have willingly been hurt still more, to receive such praises as Sir Edward lavishes on him. Listen to what he says— ‘Not a boy or man on board distinguished himself more than your nephew : in fact, I am only astonished he escaped as he did, for those pirates are desperate fighters, and when we boarded them, Fortescue was in the midst of them, fighting like a young lion. Courage and gallantry are such dazzling qualities in a young lad, that we think more of them perhaps than we ought, but I cannot say too much for your nephew ; I have not a lad more devoted to his duty. I was glad to show him my approbation by giving him some days’ liberty, when we were off New York ; but I have since told him, the air of land certainly did not agree with him, for he has looked paler and thinner ever since.

He is growing very fast; and altogether, if I have occasion to send another prize schooner home, I think it not improbable I shall nominate him as one of the officers, that he may have the benefit of the healthful breezes of Old England, to bring back his full strength.' There, Ellen, I think that is a still better birthday-present than even Edward's own letter. I am as proud of my nephew as Sir Edward is."

"And do you think, he really will come?" asked Ellen, trying to conquer her emotion.

"We will hope it, dearest," replied her aunt, kindly. "But do not think too much about it, even if Sir Edward be not able to do as he says. His own ship will be coming home in a year or two, and you owned to me yourself this morning, it did not seem as long as it really is, since our dear sailor left us; so the remaining time will soon pass. Finish your breakfast, and go, love, and enjoy his letter again to yourself."

And Ellen gladly obeyed; for it was from no imaginary cause, that the receipt of Edward's letters so often paled her cheek, and parched her lip with terror. She knew that, concerning him, which none else but Harding did; and even when those letters imparted nothing but that which she could read to her family, the dread was quite enough to banish anything like the elastic happiness, natural to her age, and called for by the kindness of those she loved. His letter this time, however, had not a word to call for that sickness of the heart, with which she had received it, and she read it again and again; with a thankfulness, too intense for words.

"You dropped this, Ellen dear," said the voice of

her cousin Emmeline at her door, ten minutes after she had left the breakfast-room. "It was under the table, and I do not think you have read it; it is the inclosure I was so amused at."

"I dare say it is a letter written for some other opportunity, and forgotten to be sent; it is only a few words," replied Ellen, as she looked at its length, not at its meaning, for the fearful lesson of quiet unconcern when the heart is bursting, had been too early learned.

"Then I will leave you in peace: by the by, cousin Mine, Papa told me to tell you, that as the Prince William is soon going to cruise again, your answer to Edward must be ready this day week the latest, and Mamma says, if you like to write part of it now that all Edward's little love-speeches are fresh in your mind, you can do so; it is your birthday, and you may spend it as you like, How I shall enjoy making a lion of my cousin, when he comes!"—and away tripped the happy girl, singing some wild snatch of an old ballad about sailors.

Ellen shut the door, secured it, and with a lip and cheek colourless as her robe, an eye strained and blood-shot, read the following words—few indeed!

"Ellen! I am again in that villain's power, and for a sum so trifling, that it maddens me to think I cannot discharge it without again appealing to you. I had resolved never to play again—and again some demon lured me to those Hells! If I do not pay him by my next receipts from home, he will expose me, and what then—disgrace, expulsion, *death*! for I will not survive it; there are easy means of self-destruction to a sailor, and who shall know but that he is accidentally drowned?

You promised me to save part of every allowance in case I needed it. If you would indeed save me, send me five and thirty pounds! Ellen! by some means, I *must* have it; but breathe it to my uncle or aunt—for if *she* knows it, *he* will—and you will never see me more!”

For one long hour Ellen never moved. Her brain felt scorched, her limbs utterly powerless. Every word seemed to write itself in letters of fire on her heart and brain, till she could almost have screamed, from the dread agony; and then came the heavy weight, so often felt before, but never crushing every thought and energy as now, the seeming utter impossibility to comply with that fearfully urged demand. *He* called it a sum so trifling, and *she* felt a hundred, ay a thousand pounds were not more difficult to obtain. She had saved indeed, denying herself every little indulgence, every personal gratification, spending only what she was obliged, and yet compelled to let her aunt believe, she had properly expended all, that she might have the means of sending him money when he demanded it, without exposing herself to doubt and displeasure as before; but in the eight months since his last call, she had only been enabled to put by fifteen pounds, not half the sum he needed. How was she to get the rest? and she had so buoyed herself with the fond hope, that even if he did write for help again, she could send it to him so easily—and now—her mind seemed actually to reel beneath the intense agony of these desperate words. She was too young, too believing, and too terror-stricken to doubt for a moment the alternative he placed before her, with a vividness, a desperation, of which he was

unconscious himself. Those words spoken, would have been terrible, almost awful in one so young—though a brief interval would have sufficiently calmed both the hearer and the speaker, to satisfy, that they were *but words*, and that self-destruction is never breathed, if really intended—but *written*, the writer at a distance, imagination at liberty, to heighten every terror, every reality, their reader a young loving girl, utterly ignorant of the world's ways and temptations, and the many errors to which youth is subject, but from which manhood may spring up unsullied; and so believing, almost crushed by the belief, that her brother, the only one, her own, respected, beloved, as he was said to be, had yet committed such faults, as would hurl him from his present position to the lowest depth of degradation, for what else could tempt him, to swear not to survive it? Was it marvel, that poor Ellen was only conscious that she must save him?—Again did her dying mother stand before her—again did her well-remembered voice beseech her to save him, her darling, beautiful Edward, from disgrace and punishment,—reiterate that her word was pledged, and she *must* do it, and if she suffered—had she not done so from infancy—and what was her happiness to his? Define, why it should be of less moment, indeed, she could not. It was the fatal influences of her childhood working alone.

How that day passed, Ellen never knew. She had been too long accustomed to control, to betray her internal suffering, (terror for Edward seemed to endow her with additional self-command,) except by a deadly paleness, which even her aunt at length remarked. It

was quite evening, and the party were all scattered, when Mrs. Hamilton discovered Ellen sitting in one of the deep recesses of the windows : her work in her lap, her hands clasped tightly together, and her eyes fixed on the beautiful scenery of the park, but not seeing a single object.

“ My dear Ellen, I am going to scold you, so prepare,” was her aunt’s lively address, as she approached and stood by her. “ You need not start so guiltily and look so very terrified, but confess that you are thinking about Edward, and worrying yourself that he is not quite so strong as he was, and magnifying his wound, till you fancy it something very dreadful, when, I dare say, if the truth were told, he himself is quite proud of it ; come, confess, and I will only give you a very little lecture for your excessive silliness.”

Ellen looked up in her face ; that kind voice, that affectionate smile, that caressing, constantly-forgiving love, would they again all be forfeited, again give way to coldness, loss of confidence, heightened displeasure ? How indeed she was to act, she knew not ; she only knew there must be concealment, the very anticipation of which, seemed too terrible to bear, and she burst into an agony of tears.

“ Why Ellen—my dear child—you cannot be well, to let either the accounts of your brother, or my threatened scolding, so affect you, and on your birthday too ! why all the old women would say it was such a bad omen, that you would be unhappy all the year round. Come, this will never do, I must lecture in earnest, if you do not try to conquer this unusual weakness. We have

much more to be very thankful for, in Sir Edward's account of our dear sailor than to cry about ; he might have been seriously wounded or maimed, and what would you have felt then ? I wonder if he will find as much change in you, as we shall in him. If you are not quite strong and quite well, and quite happy to greet him when he comes, I shall consider my care insulted, and punish you accordingly. Still no smile—what is the matter, dearest ? Are you really not well again ?”

Ellen made a desperate effort, conquered her tears, and tried to converse cheerfully. It was absolute agony to hear Edward's name, but she nerved herself to do so, to acknowledge she was thinking of him, and that it *was* very silly to worry about such a slight wound : and when Mrs. Hamilton proposed that they should walk over to Greville Manor, and tell the good news to Mrs. Greville and Mary, acquiesced with apparent pleasure.—

“Ah do, Mamma ; you have not asked me, but I shall go notwithstanding,” exclaimed Emmeline, springing through the open window, with her usual airy step.—

“Why Emmeline, I thought you were going to the village with your sister !”

“No ; she and Miss Harcourt were talking much too soberly to suit me this evening. Then I went to tease Papa, but he let me do just what I pleased, being too engrossed with some disagreeable farmers, to notice me, so in despair I came here.—Why Ellen, you look as if this were any day but what it is ; unless you cry because you are getting old, which I am very often inclined to do ; only think, I am sixteen next December, —how dreadful ! I do wish my birthday were in June.”

“And what difference would that make?”

“A great deal, Mamma; only look how lovely every thing is now; Nature is quite juvenile, and has dressed herself in so many colours, and seems to promise so many more beauties, that, whether we will or no, we must feel gay and young; but in December, though it is very delightful *in* the house, it is so drear and withered without, that if born in such a season, one must feel withered too.”

“When do you intend to speak in prose, Emmeline?”

“Never, if I can help it, Mamma; but I must learn the lesson before I go to London, I suppose; that horrid London! that is one reason why I regret the years going so fast; I know I shall leave all my happiness here.”

“You will be more ungrateful, than I believe you, if you do,” replied her mother. “So pray banish such foolish fancies as fast as you can; for if you encourage them, I shall certainly suppose that it is only Oakwood you love; and that neither your father nor myself, nor any member of your family, has any part in your affections, for we shall be with you wherever you are.”

“Dear Mamma, I spoke at random, forgive me,” replied Emmeline instantly, self-reproached. “I am indeed the giddy brain Papa calls me; but you cannot tell how I love this dear old home.”

“Indeed I think I can, my dear child, loving it as I do myself; but come, we shall have no time for our visit, if we do not go at once.”

Days passed, and were each followed by such sleepless feverish nights, that Ellen felt it almost a miracle, that

she could so seem, so act, as to excite no notice. The image of her dying mother never left her night or day, mingled with the horrid scene of her father's death, and Edward disgraced, expelled, and seeking death by his own hand. There was only one plan that seemed in the least feasible, and that was to send to him, or sell herself the watch she had received on her birthday, and if that was not enough, some few trinkets, which had been her mother's, and which the last six months her aunt had given into her own care. She ventured casually to inquire if there were any opportunity of sending a parcel to Edward, but the answer was in the negative, and increased her difficulty. The only person she dared even to think of so far intrusting with her deep distress and anxiety for money, but not its cause, was widow Langford, the mother of Robert, (the young gentleman's attendant, whom we had occasion more than once to mention, and the former nurse of all Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton's children. She occupied a cottage on the outskirts of the park, and was not only a favorite with all the young party, Ellen included, for she generally came to nurse her in her many illnesses,) but was regarded with the greatest confidence and affection by Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton themselves. They had endeavoured to return her unwavering fidelity and active service, by taking her only child Robert into their family when only seven; placing him under the immediate charge of Morris, the steward, and of course living in the same house, of his mother also; and when fifteen, making him personal attendant to Percy and Herbert, who were then about ten and eleven years old. An older and more experienced

domestic had, however, accompanied the young men to College, and Robert remained employed in many little confidential services for his master at Oakwood.

To widow Langford, Ellen tried to resolve that she would apply, but her fearful state of mental agony had not marked the lapse of time, or had caused her to forget that her letter must be ready in a week. The party were all going a delightful excursion, and to drink tea at Greville Manor, so that they would not be home till quite late; but in the morning, Ellen, though she had dressed for going out, appeared to have every symptom of such a violent headache, that her aunt advised her remaining quietly at home, and she assented with eagerness, refusing every offer of companionship, saying if the pain went off, she could quite amuse herself, and if it continued, quietness and Ellis's nursing were the best things for her.

"But give me your letter before we go out, Ellen, I am only waiting for it, to close mine to Sir Edward.—Why, my dear, have you forgotten I told you it must be ready by to-day?" her uncle added, surprised at her exclamation that she had not finished it. "It must be done and sent to T. before four to-day, so I do hope your head will allow you to write, for Edward will be woefully disappointed if there be not a line from you, especially as from his ship cruising about, it may be several weeks before he can hear again. I must leave my letter with you, to inclose Edward's and seal up, and pray see that it goes in time."

Ellen tried to promise that it should, but her tongue actually clove to the roof of her mouth; but all the

party dispersing at the moment, her silence was unnoticed. Mr. Hamilton gave her his letter, and in half an hour afterwards she was alone. She sat for nearly an hour in her own room, with her desk before her, her face buried in her hands, and her whole frame shaking as with an ague.

"It must be," she said at length, and unlocking a drawer, took thence a small cross and one or two other trinkets, put them up, and taking off her watch, looked at it with such an expression of suffering, that it seemed as if she could not go on, carefully folded it up with the other trinkets, and murmuring, "if nurse Langford will but take these, and lend me the twenty pounds till she can dispose of them, I may save him yet,—and if she betray me—if she tell my aunt afterwards, at least only I shall suffer; they will not suspect him. But oh—to lose—to be doubted, hated, which I must be at last. Oh Mother! Mother! Why may I not tell my aunt? she would not disgrace him." And again she crouched down, cowed by that fearful struggle to the very earth. After a few minutes, it passed, and deliberately putting on her bonnet and shawl, she took up her trinkets, and set off to the widow's cottage, her limbs so trembling, that she knew not how she should accomplish even that short walk.

The wind was unusually high, although the day was otherwise lovely, and she was scarcely able to stand against the strong breeze, especially as every breath seemed to increase the pain in her temples; but she persisted. The nearest path lay through a thick hrubbery, almost a wood, which the family never used,

and, in fact, the younger members were prohibited from taking, but secrecy and haste were all which at that moment entered Ellen's mind. She felt so exhausted by the wind blowing the branches and leaves noisily and confusedly around, that on reaching a sort of grassy glade, more open than her previous path, she sat down a minute on a mossy stone. The wind blew some withered sticks and leaves towards her, and, amongst them, two or three soiled pieces of thin paper, stained with damp, one of which she raised mechanically, and started up with a wild cry, and seized the others almost unconsciously. She pressed her hands over her eyes, and her lips moved in the utterance of thanksgiving. "Saved!—Edward and myself, too!—some guardian angel must have sent them!" if not actually spoken, were so distinctly uttered in her heart, that she thought she heard them; and she retraced her steps, so swiftly—so gladly, the very pain and exhaustion were unfelt. She wrote for half an hour intently—eagerly; though that which she wrote she knew not herself, and never could recall. She took from the secret drawer of her desk, (that secret drawer which when Percy had so laughingly showed her the secret of its spring, telling her nobody but himself knew it, she little thought she should have occasion so to use,) some bank-notes, of two, three, and five pounds each, making the fifteen she had so carefully hoarded, and placed with them the two she had found. As she did so she discovered that two had clung so closely together that the sum was five pounds more than she wanted. Still, as acting under the influence of some spell, she

carelessly put one aside, sealed up the packet to Edward, inclosed it in her uncle's to Sir Edward Manly, and despatched it full four hours before the hour Mr. Hamilton had named. It was gone; and she sat down to breathe. Some impulse, never experienced before, urged her, instead of destroying Edward's desperate letter, as she had done similar appeals, to retain it in a blank envelope in that same secret drawer. As she tried to rouse herself from a sort of stupor which was strangely creeping over her, her eye caught the five pound note which she had not had occasion to use, and a thought of such overwhelming wretchedness rushed upon her, as effectually, for the moment, to disperse that stupor, and prostrate her in an agony of supplication before her God.

"What have I done?"—if her almost maddening thoughts could have found words, such they would have been—"How dared I appropriate that money, without one question—one thought—as to whom it could belong? Sent me? No, no! Who could have sent it? Great God of Mercy! O, if Thy wrath must fall on a guilty one, pour it on me, but spare, spare, my brother! I have sinned, but I meant it not—thought not of it—knew not what I did! Thou knowest, Thou alone canst know, the only thought of that moment—the agony of this. No suffering, no wrath, can be too great for me; but, oh! spare him!"

How long that withering agony lasted, Ellen knew not, nor whether her tears fell, or lay scorching her eyes and heart. The note lay before her like some hideous spectre, from which she vainly tried to turn.

What could she do with it? Take it back to the spot where the others had been blown to her? She tried to rise to do so; but, to her own terror, she found she was so powerless that she actually could not walk. With desperate calmness she placed it in the little secret drawer, put up the remainder of her papers, closed and locked her desk, and laid down upon her bed, for she could sit up no longer. Ellis came to her, with an inquiry after her head, and if she could take her dinner. Ellen asked for a cup of coffee, and to be left quite quiet instead, as writing had not decreased the pain; and the housekeeper, accustomed to such casual attacks, did as she was requested, and came frequently to see her in the course of the afternoon and evening; still without perceiving anything unusual, and, therefore, not tormenting her with any expression of surprise or anxiety.

Thought after thought congregated in the poor girl's mind, as she thus lay; so fraught with agony that the physical suffering, which was far more than usual, was unfelt, save in its paralysing effect on every limb. Her impulse was to confess exactly what she had done to her aunt the moment she could see her, and conjure her to sentence her to some heavy chastisement, that must deaden her present agony; but this was impossible without betraying Edward, and nullifying for him the relief she had sent. How could she confess the sin, without the full confession of the use to which that money had been applied? Whose were the notes? They were stained with damp, as if they must have lain amongst those withered leaves some time; and yet she

had heard no inquiry made about them, as the loss of so large a sum would surely have demanded. The only plan she could think of, as bringing the least hope of returning peace, was still to beseech Mrs. Langford to dispose of her watch and trinkets, and the very first mention she heard made of the loss to return the full sum to the real possessor, if possible, so secretly as for it not to be traced to herself. She thought, too, that if she gave her trinkets, one by one, not altogether, to Mrs. Langford, it would be less suspicious, and, perhaps, more easily prevail on her to grant her secrecy and assistance; and if she positively refused, unless Ellen revealed the reason of her desiring their disposal, and would solemnly promise secrecy, she would tell her sufficient of her intense misery, as might perhaps induce her to give her aid. If she did not demand the reason and betrayed her, she must endure the doubt and serious displeasure such a course of acting on her part would inevitably produce; but two things alone stood clear before her: she *must* replace that money—she *must* keep Edward's secret. She would have gone that very day to Mrs. Langford, but she could not move, and Ellis, at seven o'clock, prevailed on her to undress and go to bed.

“Not better, my Ellen? I hoped to-day's perfect quietness would have removed your headache, and am quite disappointed,” was Mrs. Hamilton's affectionate address, as she softly entered her niece's room, on the return of the happy party at eleven at night, and placing the lamp so that the bed remained in shade she could not see any expression in Ellen's face, except that of

suffering, which she naturally attributed to physical pain. "How hot your hands and face are, love; I wish you had not left Edward's letter to write to-day. I am afraid we shall be obliged to see Mr. Maitland's face again to-morrow; if he were not as kind a friend as he is a skilful doctor, I am sure you would get quite tired of him, Ellen. Shall I stay with you? I cannot bear leaving you in pain and alone!" But Ellen would not hear of it; the pain was not more than she was often accustomed to, she said, and, indeed, she did not mind being alone,—though the unusual, almost passionate, warmth with which she returned Mrs. Hamilton's fond kiss betrayed it was no indifference to the affectionate offer which dictated her refusal. It was well Mrs. Hamilton, though anxious enough to feel the inclination to do so, did not visit her niece again, or the convulsive agony she would have witnessed, the choking sobs which burst forth a few minutes after she disappeared from Ellen's sight, would have bewildered and terrified her yet more.

CHAPTER III.

A SUMMONS AND A LOSS.

MR. MAITLAND declared Ellen to be ill of a nervous fever, which for three days confined her to her bed, and left her very weak for some little time, and so nervous that the least thing seem to startle her ; but, as he said it was of no consequence, and she would soon recover, Mrs. Hamilton adopted his advice, took no notice of it, and only endeavoured to make her niece's daily routine as varied in employment, though regular in hours and undisturbed in quiet, as she could. Perhaps she would have felt more anxious and discovered something not quite usual in Ellen's manner, if her thoughts had not been painfully preoccupied. About a week after their excursion, she entered the library earlier than usual, and found her husband intently engaged with some despatches, just received. She saw he was more than ordinarily disturbed, and hesitated a moment whether to address him ; but he was seldom so engrossed as to be unconscious of the presence of his wife.

"I am really glad you are here at this moment, Emmeline, for I actually was weak enough to shrink from seeking you with unpleasant news. Letters from Feroe have at length arrived, and my personal presence

is so imperatively needed, that I am self-reproached at not going before ; the long silence ought to have convinced me that all was not as it should be."

"But what has occurred, Arthur? I had no idea you contemplated the necessity of going," replied his wife, very quietly, as she sat down close by him ; but the fiat of separation, the thoughts of a perilous voyage, a visit to an almost desolate island, and the impossibility of receiving regular letters, so crowded upon her all at once, that it was a strong effort to speak at all.

"No, dearest ; for what was the use of tormenting you with disagreeable anticipations, when there really might have been no foundation for them. The last accounts from Samboe were, as you know, received nearly two years ago, telling me that Frederic Wilson was dead, but that his son had been received as his successor in the ministry and as civil guardian of the island, with, if possible, a still greater degree of popularity than his predecessors, from his having been educated in Denmark. His parents had lived on straitened means to give him superior advantages, which, as it proves, he would have been much better without. The vices he has acquired have far outrun the advantages. His example, and that of a band of idle irregular spirits who have joined him, has not only scandalized the simple people but disturbed their homesteads, brought contention and misery, and, in some cases, bloodshed ; so that in point of social and domestic position, I fear they have sunk lower than when my grandfather first sought the island. The mother of this unhappy young man has, naturally perhaps, but weakly, shrunk from informing against

him ; but her brother, the clergyman of Osteroe, has at length taken upon himself to do so, clearly stating that nothing but personal interference and some months' residence amongst them will effect a reformation ; and that the ruin is the more to be regretted, as the little island has been for more than half a century the admiration not only of its immediate neighbours, but of all who have chanced to harbour off its coast. He states, too, that if properly directed and not exposed to the contagion of large cities, as his brother has been, poor Wilson's younger son, now a boy of eleven, may become as worthy and judicious a pastor as his father and grandfather, and so keep the office in his family, as my grandfather was so desirous of doing. The question is, how is this boy to be educated on the island, and whom can I find to take the ministry meanwhile."

"And must your own residence there be very long," inquired Mrs. Hamilton, still in that quiet tone, but her lip quivered.

"It depends so entirely on whom I can get to accompany me, dearest. I must set Mr. Howard and Morton to work to find me some simple-minded, single-hearted individual, who will regard this undertaking in the same missionary spirit as the elder Wilson did. If I am happy enough to succeed in this, I hope a year or somewhat less, will be the farthest limit of our separation."

"A year! a whole long year—dearest Arthur, must it be so very, very long?"

"Who tried to persuade Ellen, a fortnight ago, that a year, even two years, would pass so very quickly?"

replied Mr. Hamilton, trying to smile, and folding his arm fondly round his wife, he kissed the cheek which had become pale from the effort to restrain her feelings. "It is indeed an unexpected and a painful trial, and, as is generally the case with our rebellious spirits, I feel as if it would have been better borne at any other period than the present. We had so portioned out this year, had so anticipated gratifying Caroline by introducing her to the so long and so eagerly anticipated pleasures of London next January, that I cannot bear to think of her disappointment."

"And our boys, too, they say it is so strange to be without their father, even in college term; what will it be when they come home for the long vacation, to which we have all so looked forward? But this is all weakness, my own dear husband; forgive me, I am only rendering your duty more difficult," she added, raising her head from his shoulder, and smiling cheerfully, even while the tears glistened in her eyes. "I must try and practise my own lesson, and believe the term of separation will really pass quickly, interminable as it now seems. We have been so blessed, so guarded from the bitter pang of even partial separation for twenty years, that how dare I murmur the trial has come now? It is God's pleasure, dearest Arthur, though it seems like the work of man, and as His we can endure it."

"Bless you, my beloved! you have indeed put a new spirit in me by those words," replied her husband, with a fondness the more intense from the actual veneration that so largely mingled with it. "And bitter disappointment as it is to me to be from home when our

sons return, it is better so perhaps, for their company will wile away at least nearly three months of my absence."

Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton remained some hours together that morning in earnest conversation. All of individual regret was conquered for the sake of the other: its expression at least, not its feeling; but they understood each other too well, too fondly, to need words or complaints to prove to either how intensely painful was the very thought of separation. To elude the performance of a duty which many persons, unable to enter into the hope of effecting good, would, no doubt, pronounce Quixotic—for what could the poor inhabitants of Samboe be to him?—never entered either Mr. or Mrs. Hamilton's mind. He was not one to neglect his immediate duties for distant ones; but believed and acted on the belief, that both could be united. His own large estate, its various farms, parishes, and villages, were so admirably ordered, that he could leave it without the smallest scruple in the hands of his wife and steward. Though interested in, and actually assisting in the political movements of his country, he was still, as from his youth he had firmly resolved to be, a free independent Englishman; bound to no party, but respected by all; retaining his own principles unshaken as a rock, though often and often his integrity had been tried by court bribes and dazzling offers. And yet, rare blending with such individual feelings, Arthur Hamilton looked with candour and kindness on the conduct and principles of others, however they might differ from

his own, and found excuses for them, which none others could. That he should give up all the comforts, the luxuries, the delights of his peculiarly happy home, to encounter several months' sojourn in a bleak, half-civilized island, only in the hope of restoring and ensuring moral and religious improvement to a small colony of human beings, whose sole claim upon him was, that they were immortal as himself, and that they had done a kindness to his grandfather more than half a century back, was likely to, and no doubt did, excite the utmost astonishment in very many circles; but not a sneer, not a word seeming to whisper good should be done at home before sought abroad, could find a moment's resting-place near Arthur Hamilton's name.

For half an hour after Mrs. Hamilton quitted her husband she remained alone, and when she rejoined her family, though she might have been a shade paler than her wont, she was as cheerful in conversation and earnest in manner as usual. That evening Mr. Hamilton informed his children and Miss Harcourt of his intended departure, and consequent compelled change of plan. Emmeline's burst of sorrow was violent and uncontrolled. Caroline looked for a minute quite bewildered, and then hastening to her father, threw one arm round his neck, exclaiming, in a voice of the most affectionate sincerity, "Dear Papa, what shall we do without you for such a long time?"

"My dear child! I thank you for such an affectionate thought; believe me, the idea of your wishes being postponed has pained me as much as anything else in this unpleasant duty."

“My wishes postponed, Papa—what do you mean?”

“Have you quite forgotten our intended plans for next January, my love?—My absence must alter them.”

For a moment an expression of bitter disappointment clouded Caroline’s open countenance.

“Indeed, Papa, I had forgotten it; I only thought of your going away for so many months. It is a great disappointment, I own, and I dare say I shall feel it still more when January comes; but I am sure parting from you must be a still greater trial to Mamma, than any such disappointment ought to be to me; and, indeed, I will try and bear it as uncomplainingly and cheerfully as she does.”

Her father almost involuntarily drew her to his heart, and kissed her two or three times, without speaking; and Caroline was very glad he did so, for when she looked up again, the tears that would come at the first thought of her disappointment were bravely sent back again; and she tried to cheer Emmeline, by assuring her she never could be like her favorite heroines of romance, if she behaved so very much like a child; taking the opportunity when they retired for the night, to say more seriously—

“Dear Emmeline, do try and be as lively as you always are. I am sure poor Mamma is suffering very much at the idea of Papa’s leaving us, though she will not let us see that she does, and if you give way so, it will make her more uncomfortable still.”

Emmeline promised to try; but her disposition, quite as susceptible to sorrow as to joy, and not nearly as firm as her sister’s, rendered the promise very difficult

to fulfil. It was her first sorrow, and Mrs. Hamilton watched her with some anxiety, half fearful that she had been wrong to shield her so carefully from anything like grief; if, when it came, she should prove unequal to its firm and uncomplaining endurance. Ellen had been out of the room when Mr. Hamilton had first spoken; and engaged in soothing Emmeline when she re-entered and the news was communicated to her, he did not observe anything particular in her mode of receiving it. But Mrs. Hamilton was so struck with the expression of her countenance, which, as she tried somewhat incoherently to utter regrets, took the place of its usual calm, that she looked at her several minutes in bewilderment; but it passed again, so completely, that she was angry with herself for fancying anything uncommon. Caroline, however, had remarked it too, and she could not help observing to Miss Harcourt, the first time they were alone—

“You will say I am always fancying something extraordinary, Miss Harcourt; but Ellen certainly did look pleased last night, when Mamma told her of Papa’s intended departure.”

“The expression must have been something extraordinary for you to remark it at all,” replied Miss Harcourt; “nobody but Mrs. Hamilton, whose penetration is out of the common, can ever read anything on Ellen’s face.”

“And it was for that very reason I looked again, and Mamma noticed it too, and was surprised, though she did not say anything. If she really be pleased, she is most ungrateful, and all her profession of feeling

Mamma and Papa's constant kindness sheer deceit. I never shall understand Ellen, I believe ; but I do hope Mamma will never discover that she is not exactly that which her affection believes her."

"Pray do not talk so, my dear Caroline, or I shall be tempted to confess that you are giving words to my own feelings. Her conduct with regard to the disappearance of her allowance, the wholly unsatisfactory account of its expenditure, even every month, for she seems to me to mention many things she has never had, banish every hopeful feeling, and I dread more than I can tell you, the very thing you have expressed. But all this is very wrong ; we have relieved each other by a mutual acknowledgment, and now let us never revert, even in thought, if possible, to the subject."

Caroline willingly acquiesced, for it was far from agreeable. Mr. Hamilton's preparations meanwhile rapidly progressed. He imparted his wishes for a companion willing to remain in the island, till young Wilson should be prepared for the ministry, both to Mr. Howard and Mr. Morton (the latter still remained in his desolate parish, still more isolated in feeling from the loss of both his parents, and Percy's absence), and both, especially Morton, gave him every hope of obtaining the character he wanted. His next inquiry was at Dartmouth for a strong well-built vessel, fitted to encounter the stormy seas between Scotland and Feroe, determining to do all in his power to provide some means of regular communication between himself and the beloved inmates of his home. Wick, in Caithness, was the farthest post town to which letters could be

addressed. Every ten days or fortnight communications were to be sent there and the Syren, after conveying him to Feroe, was regularly to ply between Samboe and Wick, bringing from the latter place to Mr. Hamilton the various letters that had accumulated there, should unfavorable winds have lengthened the voyage, and forwarding his through that post to his home. By this means, he hoped to hear and be heard of regularly; an intense relief, if it really could be so accomplished, to his wife.

As soon as a ship, a competent captain, mate, and crew were obtained, Mr. Hamilton set off for Oxford and London, wishing in the latter place to see his friend Grahame, and in the former to pass a few days with his sons, who, knowing nothing of his summons, received him with unbounded delight. Their regret, when they heard the cause of his visit, was as great as their joy had been. Percy, in a desperate fit of impatience, wished the little island and all its concerns at the bottom of the sea, the best place for such unruly disagreeable people; and he was only sobered when his father put before him that, though it must be a very heightened individual disappointment, it was the greatest comfort to him, to think that they would both be with their mother and sisters the first few months of his absence. Percy instantly altered his tone.

“You are quite right, my dear father; I was very selfish not to think of it. Trust me for making my dearest mother as cheerful and as happy as I can. You don’t know what a guardian angel the thought of her love has been to me in temptation; and as for Bertie, if ever I thought he was studying himself ill,

and not taking the care of himself he ought, or wanted him to take exercise and recreation, when he thought me a great bore, the word mother, made him yield at once."

And Herbert's kindling eye and cheek bore testimony to the truth of his brother's words. His only feeling and exclamation had been, if he might but accompany his father, and save him all the trouble he could; allowing, however, its impossibility, when the circumstances of his still delicate health and the necessity for uninterrupted study, were placed before him.

That visit to Oxford was a proud one for Mr. Hamilton. His sons held that place in the estimation of the professors, superiors, and their fellow-collegians which their early influences had promised, and which, as the sons of Arthur Hamilton, seemed naturally their own. Percy could so combine firmness in principle, unbending rectitude in conduct with such a spirit of fun and enjoyment, as rendered him the prime mover of all sports at Oxford, as he had been at Oakwood; and Herbert, though so gentle and retiring (as, until Percy's spirit was roused to shield him), gained him many nicknames and many petty annoyances, silently and insensibly won his way, and so bore with the thoughtless, the mirthful, and even the faulty, as at length to gain him the privilege of being allowed to do just as he liked, and win by his extraordinary talents the admiration and love of all the professors with whom he was thrown.

Morton had promised to introduce a person to Mr. Hamilton on his return from Oxford, who, if approved of, would be his willing, his eager assistant, and gladly

remain in the island, attending to all that was required in its superintendence, and in the education of young Wilson, till he was old enough and properly fitted to take his father's place. Great, then, was Mr. Hamilton's disappointment, when Morton entered his library according to appointment, but quite alone. Still greater was his astonishment, when he found it was Morton himself, thus eagerly desirous to become his companion, urging his wishes, his motives, Mr. Howard's sanction, with such earnestness, such single-mindedness of purpose, that every objection which, for Morton's own sake, Mr. Hamilton so strenuously brought forward, was overruled; and, after a lengthened interview, matters were arranged to the entire satisfaction of both parties. The idea of the companionship and aid of such a friend as Morton bringing as great a relief to both Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, as their acquiescence filled the whole heart of the young missionary with the most unbounded gratitude and joy. He suggested many little things, which, in the agitation of his hasty summons, had escaped his friends, and his whole being seemed transformed from despondency and listlessness to energy and hope. Engrossed as he was, Mr. Hamilton's usual thought for others had not deserted him, and he remarked that one of his household, Robert Langford, so often mentioned, appeared to linger in the library after morning and evening service, as if anxious to speak to him, but failing in courage so to do. He thought, too, that the young man seemed quite altered, dispirited, gloomy, almost wretched at times, instead of the mirthful happy being he had been before. Determining to give him an opportunity

of speaking before his departure, if he wished it, Mr. Hamilton summoned him to arrange, write a list, and pack some books, which Morton had selected to take with him. For some time Robert pursued his work in persevering silence, but at length fixed his eyes on his master with such beseeching earnestness, that Mr. Hamilton inquired the matter at once. It was some time before the young man could sufficiently compose himself to speak with any coherency, but at last Mr. Hamilton gathered the following details.

About five weeks previous (the first day of June) he had been intrusted, as he had very often before been, by his master, with certain papers and law articles to convey to Plymouth, and with a pocket-book containing thirty pounds, in two ten and two five pound notes, which he had orders to leave at some poor though respectable families, whom Mr. Hamilton was in the habit of occasionally assisting, though they were out of his own domains. The morning he was to have started on this expedition a cousin, whom he had always regarded as a brother, came unexpectedly to see him. He had just arrived at Plymouth from a four years' residence with his regiment in Ireland, and Robert's glee was so great, as to require reiterated commands from the steward to take care of the papers, and not stay at his mother's cottage, where he was to take his cousin, later than the afternoon. He lingered so long before he set off from Oakwood, that he gathered up all the papers as quickly as he could, forgot his principal charge, so far at least as not to look to the secure fastening of the pocket-book, and hastened with

his cousin through the brushwood and glade we have before mentioned, to his mother's cottage. It was very hot, and the young men, heated and in eager conversation, took off their coats, threw them loosely over their arms, and proceeded on their walk without them, much too engrossed with each other to be aware that, as they carried their coats, it was the easiest and most natural thing possible for all the smaller contents of their pockets to fall out, and if not missed directly, from the winding and rugged wood path, not likely to be found again. A draught of cider and half an hour's rest at Mrs. Langford's cottage sufficiently revived Robert to resume his coat; he satisfied himself that his packet of papers was secure, and, as he imagined from the feel of another pocket, the pocket-book also.

What, then, was his consternation, when he approached the first house at which he was to leave ten pounds of the money, about twenty miles from Oakwood, to discover that the pocket-book was gone! and that which, by its feel, he believed to have been it, an old card-case, that his young master Percy had laughingly thrown at him one day after failing in his endeavour to emblazon it, the sticky materials he had used causing it to adhere to whatever it touched, and so preserving it in Robert's pocket, when almost all the other things had fallen out. He racked his memory in vain as to what could have become of it, convinced that he had not left it at Oakwood, as he first sincerely wished that he had. Two or three other things had also disappeared, and it suddenly flashed upon him, that when carrying his coat over his arm they must have fallen out. He cursed his

thoughtlessness again and again, and would have retraced his steps immediately, but the papers with which he was intrusted had to be delivered at Plymouth by a certain hour, and he could not do it. The intense heat of the day gave place in the evening to a tremendous storm of thunder and lightning, wind and very heavy rain, which last continued unabated through the night. He returned home, or rather to his mother's cottage, the next day, in a state of mind little removed from distraction; searched the path he had traversed with his cousin in every direction, but only succeeded in finding some worthless trifles, and the pocket-book itself, but open and empty; but at a little distance from it one £5 note. In an instant he remembered that in his hurry he had failed to see to its proper fastening: if he had, all would have been right, for the wind and rain would hardly have had power to open it, and disperse its contents. Hour after hour he passed in the vain search for the remainder; the storm had rendered the path more intricate; the ground was slimy, and quantities of dried sticks and broken branches and leaves almost covered it. He told his tale to his mother in the deepest distress; what was he to do? She advised him to tell the steward the whole story, and to request him to keep back the sum she was in the habit of receiving quarterly, till the whole amount could be repaid. Robert obeyed her, but with most painful reluctance, though even then he did not imagine all the misery his carelessness would entail upon him. Morris, as was natural, was exceedingly displeased, and not only reproved him very severely, but let fall suspicions as to

the truth of his story: he knew nothing of his cousin, he said, and could not say what company he might have been led into. If the notes had fallen out of his pocket during his walk, they must be found; it was all nonsense that the wind and rain could so have scattered and annihilated them, as to remove all trace of them. He would not say anything to his master, because it would only annoy him, and the charities he would give himself, not from Mrs. Langford's allowance, but from Robert's own wages, which he should certainly stop till the whole sum was paid; he should take care how he intrusted such a responsible office to him again.

Robert was at first indignant, and violent in his protestations of the truth of his story; but as it got wind in the servants' hall, as he found himself suspected and shunned by almost all, as days merged into weeks, and there was no trace of the notes, and Morris and Ellis both united in declaring that, as no strangers passed through that part of the park, if found they must have been heard of, the young man sunk into a state of the most gloomy despondency, longing to tell his kind master the whole tale, and yet, naturally enough, shrinking from the dread of his suspicion of his honesty as more terrible than all the rest.

But Mr. Hamilton did not suspect him, and so assured him of his firm belief in his truth and innocence, that it was with great difficulty poor Robert refrained from throwing himself at his feet to pour forth his gratitude. He was so severely punished from his heedlessness, that his master would not say much about it, and soon after dismissing him, summoned Morris, and

talked with him some time on the subject, declaring he would as soon suspect his own son of dishonesty as the boy who had grown up under his own eye from infancy, and the son of such a mother. It *was* very distressing for Mrs. Langford certainly, the old steward allowed, and she looked sad enough; but it was no use, he had tried hard enough to prevent his suspicions, but they would come. None but the servants and the woodmen and gardeners went that path, and if the notes had been dropped there, they must have been found; and it was a very hard thing for the other servants, as none knew who might be suspected of appropriating them. His master was much too kind in his opinions, but he must forgive him if he continued to keep a sharp look out after the young man. Morris was very old, and somewhat opinionated; so all that his master could succeed in, was to insist that he should only keep back half of Robert's wages, till the sum was paid.

"Take away the whole, and if he have been unfortunately led into temptation, which I do not believe he has, you expose him to it again," was his judicious command. "It is all right he should return it, even though lost only by carelessness; but I will not have him put to such straits for want of a little money, as must be the case if you deprive him of all his wages; and now, my good Morris, if you cannot in conscience repeat my firm opinion of this lad's innocence to the servants, I must do it myself."

And that very evening after prayers, when the whole household was assembled in the library, Mr. Hamilton addressed them simply and briefly, mentioning that Robert Langford had himself told his tale to him, and that it

was his own opinion, and that of their mistress, that he did not deserve the suspicions attached to him, and that his fellow-servants would all be acting more charitably and religiously if they believed his story, until they had had some strong proof to the contrary: he could not, of course, interfere with private opinion; he could only tell them his own and their lady's. He acknowledged it was a very unpleasant occurrence, but he begged them all to dismiss the idea that suspicion could be attached to either of them; he felt too convinced, that had any one of his household chanced to find the missing notes, they would at once have mentioned it to the steward or housekeeper, more especially, since Robert's loss had been known amongst them only a few days after it had occurred. Appropriation, he need not tell them, in such a case was theft, and of that sin, he was perfectly certain, not one present would be guilty. He allowed that it would be much more satisfactory to have the tangible proof of Robert's innocence by discovering some trace of them; but it was not unlikely the heavy wind and rain had destroyed the thin material of the notes, or borne them into the brambly brushwood, where it was scarcely possible they could be found.

If the attention of Mrs. Hamilton, her daughters, and Miss Harcourt had not been naturally riveted on Mr. Hamilton's address, and its effect on the servants, especially Robert, whose emotion was almost overpowering, they must have remarked that Ellen had shrunk into the shade of the heavy curtains falling by one of the windows, and had unconsciously grasped the oaken back of one of the massive chairs, lips, cheek, and brow

white and rigid as sculptured marble. An almost supernatural effort alone enabled her to master the crushing agony, sending the blood up to her cheeks with such returning violence, that when she wished her aunt and uncle good night, she might have been thought more flushed than pale; but it passed unnoticed. Mrs. Hamilton too much annoyed, on Mrs. Langford's account, to think at that moment of anything but how she could best set the poor mother's heart at rest. It was very evident that, though some of the domestics after their master's address came up to Robert, shook hands with him, and begged his pardon, the greater number still sided with Morris, and retained their own less favorable opinion, and she could well imagine what Mrs. Langford's sufferings must be. It only wanted five days to that fixed for Mr. Hamilton's departure, wind permitting; and there were so many things to think of and do for him, that his family could have little thought of any thing else; but Mrs. Hamilton assured her husband she would leave no means untried to prove Robert's innocence.

For nearly an hour that same night did Ellen, after her attendant had left her, sit crouched by the side of her bed, as if some bolt had struck and withered her as she sat. One word alone sounded and resounded in her ears; she had known it, pronounced it to be such to herself numbers of times, but it had never mocked and maddened her as when spoken in her uncle's voice, and in his deepest, most expressive tone—"theft!" And she was the guilty one—and she must see the innocent, bearing the penalty of her crime, suspicion, dislike,

avoidance, for she dared not breathe the truth. Again came the wild, almost desperate, resolve to seek Mrs. Hamilton that very moment, avow herself the criminal, implore her to take back every trinket belonging to her, to replace it, and do with her what she would. But if she did confess, and so draw attention to her, how could she keep her brother's secret? Could she have firmness to bear all, rather than betray it? What proof of her inward wretchedness and remorse could there be in the mere confession of appropriation, when the use to which she had applied that money, and all concerning it, even to the day it was found, must be withheld, lest it should in any way be connected with her letter to her brother. She *must* be silent; and the only prayer which, night and morning, ay, almost every hour, rose, from that young heart, was for death, ere it was too late for God's forgiveness.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BROKEN DESK.

THE many secret wishes for an unfavorable wind, that Mr. Hamilton might stay at Oakwood still a little longer, were not granted, and he left his family the very day he had fixed, the 14th of July, just three weeks after his summons, and about ten days before his sons were expected home. Without him Oakwood was strange indeed, but with the exception of Emmeline, all seemed determined to conquer the sadness and anxiety, which the departure of one so beloved, naturally occasioned. Emmeline was so unused to anything like personal sorrow, that she rather seemed to luxuriate in its indulgence.

“Do you wish to both disappoint and displease me, my dear Emmeline?” her mother said, one day, about a week after her husband had gone, as she entered the music-room, expecting to find her daughter at the harp, but perceiving her instead, listless and dispirited on the sofa. “Indeed, you will do both, if you give way to this most uncalled-for gloom.”

“Uncalled for,” replied Emmeline, almost pettishly.

“Quite uncalled for, to the extent in which you are indulging it; and even if called for, do you not think you would be acting more correctly, if you thought more

of others than yourself, and tried to become your own cheerful self for their sakes? It is the first time you have ever given me cause to suspect you of selfishness; and I am disappointed."

"Selfishness, Mamma; and I do hate the thought of it so! Am I selfish?" she repeated, her voice faltering, and her eyes filling fast with tears.

"I hope not, my love; but if you do not try to shake off this depression, we must believe you to be so. Your father's absence is a still greater trial to Caroline than it is to you, for it compels a very bitter disappointment, as well as the loss of his society; and yet, though she feels both deeply, she has exerted herself more than I ever saw her do before, and so proves, more than any words or tears could do, how much she loves both him and me."

"And do you think I love you both, less than she does?" replied Emmeline, now fairly sobbing.

"No, dearest; but I want you to prove it in the same admirable manner. Do you think I do not feel your father's absence, Emmeline? but would you like to see me as sad and changed as you are?"

Emmeline looked up in her face, for there was something in the tone that appealed to her better feelings at once. Throwing her arms round her, she sobbed—

"Dear Mamma, do forgive me. I see now I have been very selfish and very weak, but I never, never can be as firm and self-controlled as you and Caroline are."

"Do not say never, love, or you will never try to be so. I am quite sure you would not like to be one of those weak, selfish characters, who lay all their faults, and all the mischief their faults produce, on a sup-

posed impossibility to become like others. I know your disposition is naturally less strong and firm than your sister's, but it is more elastic, and still more joyous; and so had you not too weakly encouraged your very natural sorrow, you would have been enabled to throw it off, and in the comfort such an exertion would have brought to us, fully recompensed yourself."

"And if I do try now?"

"I shall be quite satisfied, dearest; though I fear you will find it more difficult than had you tried a few days ago. Confess that I am right. Did you not, after the first two or three days, feel that you could have been cheerful again, at least at times, but that you fancied you had not felt sorry enough, and so increased both sorrow and anxiety by determinedly dwelling on them, instead of seeking some pursuit?"

"Dear Mamma, shall I never be able to hide a feeling from you?" answered Emmeline, so astonished, that her tears half dried. "I did not know I felt so myself till you put it before me, and now I know that I really did. Was it very wrong?"

"I will answer your question by another, love. Did you find such pertinacious indulgence of gloom, help you to bring the object of your regret and anxiety, and of your own grief before your Heavenly Father?"

Emmeline hesitated, but only for a minute, then answered with a crimson blush.

"No, Mamma; I could not pray to God to protect dear Papa, or to give me His blessing, half as earnestly and believingly as when I was happier; the more I indulged in gloomy thoughts, the more difficulty I had

to turn them to prayer, and the last few days, I fear I have not even tried."

"Then, dearest, is it necessary for me to answer your former question? I see by that conscious look that it is not. You have always trusted my experience and affection, my Emmeline, trust them now, and try my plan. Think of your dear father, whom you cannot love too well, or whose compelled absence really regret too much; but so think of him, as to pray continually in spirit to your gracious God, to have him always in His holy keeping, either on sea or land, in storm or calm, and so prosper his undertaking, as to permit his return to us still sooner than we at present expect. The very constant prayer for this, will make you rest secure and happy in the belief, that our God is with him wherever he is, as He is with us, and so give you cheerfulness and courage to attend to your daily duties, and conquer anything like too selfish sorrow. Will you try this, love, even if it be more difficult now, than it would have been a few days ago?"

"I will indeed, Mamma," and she raised her head from her mother's shoulder, and tried to smile. "When you first addressed me to-day, I thought you were almost harsh and so cold—so you see even there I was thinking wrong—and now I am glad, oh, so glad you did speak to me!"

"And I know who will be glad too, if I have prevented his having a Niobe for his Tiny, instead of the Euphrosyne which I believe he sometimes calls you. I thought there was one particular duet that Percy is to be so charmed with, Emmy. Suppose you try it now." And, her tears all

checked, her most unusual gloom dispersed, Emmeline obeyed with alacrity, and finding, when she had once begun, so many things to get perfect for the gratification of her brothers, that nearly three hours slipped away quite unconsciously ; and when Caroline returned from a walk, she was astonished at the change in her sister, and touched by the affectionate self-reproach with which Emmeline, looking up in her face, exclaimed—

“ Dear Caroline, I have been so pettish and so cross to you since Papa left, that I am sure you must be quite tired of me ; but I am going to be really a heroine now, and not a sham sentimental one ; and bear the pain of Papa’s absence as bravely as you do.”

And she did so ; though at first it was, as her mother had warned her, very difficult to compel the requisite exertion, which for employment and cheerfulness, was now needed ; but when the *will* is right, there is little fear of failure.

As each day passed, so quickly merging into weeks, that five had now slipped away since that fatal letter had been sent to Edward, the difficulty to do as she had intended, entreat Mrs. Langford to dispose of her trinkets and watch, became to Ellen, either in reality or seeming, more and more difficult. Her illness had confined her to her room for nearly a week, and when she was allowed to take the air, the state of nervous debility to which it had reduced her, of course prevented her ever being left alone. The day after Mr. Hamilton’s appeal to his domestics, she had made a desperate attempt, by asking permission to be the bearer of a message from her aunt to the widow ; and as the girls were often allowed and en-

couraged to visit their nurse, the request was granted without any surprise, though to the very last moment she feared one of her cousins or Miss Harcourt would offer to accompany her. They were all, however, too occupied with and for Mr. Hamilton, and she sought the cottage, and there with such very evident mental agony, besought Mrs. Langford to promise her secrecy and aid, that the widow, very much against her conscience, was won over to accede. She was in most pressing want of money she urged, and dared not appeal to her aunt. Not daring to say the whole amount which she so urgently required at once, she had only brought with her the antique gold cross and two or three smaller ornaments, which had been amongst her mother's trinkets, and a gold locket Percy had given her. Mrs. Langford was painfully startled. She had no idea her promise comprised acquiescence and assistance in any matter so very wrong and mysterious as this; and she tried every argument, every persuasion, to prevail on Ellen to confide all her difficulties to Mrs. Hamilton, urging that if even she had done wrong, it could only call for temporary displeasure, whereas the mischief of her present proceeding might never come to an end, and must be discovered at last; but Ellen was inexorable, though evidently quite as miserable as she was firm, and Mrs. Langford had too high an idea of the solemn nature of a pledged word to draw back, or think of betraying her. She said that of course it might be some weeks before she could succeed in disposing of them all; as to offer them altogether, or even at one place, would be exposing herself to the most unpleasant suspicions.

One step was thus gained, but nearly a fortnight had passed, and she heard nothing from the widow.

“Will they never come?” exclaimed Emmeline, in mirthful impatience, one evening, about four days after her conversation with her mother; “it *must be* past the hour Percy named.”

“It still wants half an hour,” replied Mrs. Hamilton; adding, “that unfortunate drawing, when will it succeed in obtaining your undivided attention?”

“Certainly not this evening, Mamma; the only drawing I feel inclined for, is a sketch of my two brothers, if they would only have the kindness to sit to me.”

“Poor Percy,” observed Caroline drily; “if you are to be as restless as you have been the last hour, Emmeline, he would not be very much flattered by his portrait.”

“Now that is very spiteful of you, Caroline, and all because I do not happen to be so quiet and sober as you are; though I am sure all this morning, that Mamma thought by your unusually long absence that you were having a most persevering practice, you were only collecting all Percy’s and Herbert’s favorite songs and pieces, and playing them over, instead of your new music.”

“And what if I did, Emmeline?”

“Why, it only proves that your thoughts are quite as much occupied with them as mine are, though you have so disagreeably read, studied, worked, just as usual, to make one believe you neither thought nor cared anything about them.”

“And so because Caroline can control even joyous anticipation, she is to be thought void of feeling, Emmy. I really can pronounce no such judgment; so, though

she may have settled to her usual pursuits, and you have literally done nothing at all to-day, I will not condemn her as loving her brothers less."

"But you will condemn me as an idle, unsteady, hair-brained girl," replied Emmeline, kneeling on the ottoman at her mother's feet, and looking archly and fondly in her face. Then do let me have a fellow-sufferer, for I cannot stand condemnation alone. Ellen, do put away that everlasting sketch, and be idle and unsteady too!"

"It won't do, Emmy; Ellen has been so perseveringly industrious since her illness, that I should rather condemn her for too much application than too great idleness. But you really have been stooping too long this warm evening, my love," she added, observing, as Ellen, it seemed almost involuntarily, looked up at her cousin's words, that her cheeks were flushed almost painfully. "Oblige Emmeline this once, and be as idle as she is: come and talk to me, I have scarcely heard a word from you to-day; you have been more silent than ever, I think, since your uncle left us; but I must have no gloom to greet your cousins, Ellen."

There was no rejoinder to these kind and playful words. Ellen did indeed put aside her drawing, but instead of taking a seat near her aunt, which in former days she would have been only too happy to do, she walked to the farthest window, and ensconcing herself in its deep recess, seemed determined to hold communion with no one. Miss Harcourt was so indignant, as scarcely to be able to contain its expression. Caroline looked astonished and provoked. Emmeline was much too busy in flying from window to window, to think of

anything else but her brothers. Mrs. Hamilton was more grieved and hurt than Ellen had scarcely ever made her feel. Several times before in the last month, she had fancied there was something unusual in her manner, but the many anxieties and thoughts which had engrossed her since her husband's summons and his departure had prevented anything, till that evening, but momentary surprise. Emmeline's exclamation, that she was quite sure she heard the trampling of horses, and that it must be Percy, by the headlong way he rode, prevented any remark, and brought them all to the window; and she was right, for in a few minutes a horseman emerged from some distant trees, urging his horse to its utmost speed, waving his cap in all sorts of mirthful gesticulations over his head, long before he could be quite sure that there was anybody to see him. Another minute, and he had flung the reins to Robert with a laughing greeting, and springing up the long flight of steps in two bounds, was in the sitting-room and in the arms of his mother, before either of his family imagined he could have had even time to dismount.

"Herbert?" was the first word Mrs. Hamilton's quivering lip could speak.

"Is quite well, my dearest Mother, and not five minutes' ride behind me. The villagers would flock round us, with such an hurrah, I thought you must have heard it here; so I left Bertie to play the agreeable, and promised to see them to-morrow, and galloped on here, for you know the day we left, I vowed that the firstborn of my mother should have her first kiss."

"Still the same, Percy,—not sobered yet, my boy?"

said his mother, looking at him with a proud smile, for while the tone and manner were still the eager fresh feeling boy, the face and figure were that of the fine-growing noble-looking man.

“Sobered! why, mother, I never intend to be,” he answered joyously, as he alternately embraced his sisters, Miss Harcourt, and Ellen, who, fearing to attract notice, had emerged from her hiding-place; “if the venerable towers of that most wise and learned town, Oxford, and all the grave lectures and long faces of sage professors have failed to tame me, there can be no hope for my sobriety; but here comes Herbert, actually going it almost as fast as I did. Well done, my boy! Mother, that is all your doing; he feels your influence at this distance. Why all the Oxonians would fancy the colleges must be tumbling about their ears, if they saw the gentle, studious, steady Herbert Hamilton riding at such a rate.” He entered almost as his brother spoke; and though less boisterous, the intense delight it was to him to look in his mother’s face again, to be surrounded by all he loved, was as visible as Percy’s; and deep was the thankfulness of Mrs. Hamilton’s ever anxious heart, as she saw him looking so well—so much stronger than in his boyhood. The joy of that evening, and of very many succeeding days was, indeed, great; though many to whom the sanctity and bliss of domestic affection are unknown, might fancy there was little to call for it; but to the inmates of Oakwood it was real happiness to hear Percy’s wild laugh and his inexhaustible stories, calling forth the

same mirth from his hearers—the very sound of his ever-bounding step, and his boisterous career from room to room, to visit, he declared, and rouse all the bogies and spirits that must have slept while he was away : Herbert's quieter but equal interest in all that had been done, studied, read, even thought and felt, in his absence : the pride and delight of both in the accounts of Edward, Percy insisting that to have such a gallant fellow of a brother ought to make Ellen as lively and happy as Emmeline, who was blessed nearly in the same measure—looking so excessively mischievous as he spoke, that, though his sister did not at first understand the inference, it was speedily discovered, and called for a laughing attack on his outrageous self-conceit. Herbert more earnestly regretted to see Ellen looking as sad and pale as when she was quite a little girl, and took upon himself gently to reproach her for not being or, at least, trying to make herself more cheerful, when she had so many blessings around her, and was so superlatively happy in having such a brave and noble-hearted brother. If he did not understand her manner as he spoke, both he and the less observant Percy were destined to be still more puzzled and grieved as a few weeks passed, and they at first fancied and then were quite sure that she was completely altered, even in her manner to their mother. Instead of being so gentle, so submissive, so quietly happy to deserve the smallest sign of approval from Mrs. Hamilton, she now seemed completely to shrink from her, either in fear, or that she no longer cared either to please or to obey her. By imperceptible,

but sure, degrees this painful conviction pressed itself on the minds of the whole party, even to the light-hearted unsuspecting Emmeline, to whom it was so utterly incomprehensible, that she declared it must be all fancy, and that they were all so happy that their heads must be a little turned.

“Even Mamma’s!” observed Caroline, drily.

“No; but she is the only sensible person amongst us, for she has not said anything about it, and, therefore, I dare say does not even see that which we are making such a wonder about.”

“I do not agree with you, for I rather think she has both seen and felt it before either of us, and that because it so grieves and perplexes her she cannot speculate or even speak about it as we do. Time will explain it, I suppose, but it is very disagreeable.”

It was, indeed, no fancy; but little could these young observers or even Mrs. Hamilton suspect that which was matter of speculation or grief to them, was almost madness in its agony of torture to Ellen; who, as weeks passed, and but very trifling returns for her trinkets were made her by Mrs. Langford, felt as if her brain must fail before she could indeed accomplish her still ardently desired plan, and give back the missing sum to Robert, without calling suspicion on herself. She felt to herself as changed as she appeared to those that observed her; a black impenetrable pall seemed to have enveloped her heart and mind, closing up both, even from those affections, those pursuits, so dear to her before. She longed for some change from the dense impenetrable fog, even if it were some heavy blow,—tangible suffering of the

fiercest kind was prayed for, rather than the stagnation which caused her to move, act, and speak as if under some fatal spell, and look with such terror on the relation she had so loved, that even to be banished from her presence, she imagined would be less agony, than to associate with her, as the miserable guilty being she had become.

Mrs. Hamilton watched and was anxious, but she kept both her observations and anxiety to herself, for she would not throw even a temporary cloud over the happiness of her children. A fortnight after the young men's arrival, letters came most unexpectedly from Mr. Hamilton, dated twelve days after he had left, and brought by a Scottish trader whom they had encountered near the Shetland Isles, and who had faithfully forwarded them from Edinburgh as he had promised. The voyage had been most delightful, and they hoped to reach Feroe in another week. He wrote in the highest terms of Morton; the comfort of such companionship, and the intrinsic worth of his character, which could never be known until so closely thrown together.

"I may thank our Percy for this excellent friend," he wrote. "He tells me his brave and honest avowal of those verses, which had given him so much pain, attracted him more towards me and mine, than even my own efforts to obtain his friendship. Percy little thought when he so conquered himself the help he would give his father,—so little do we know to what hidden good, the straightforward honest performance of a duty, however painful, may lead."

"My father should thank you, Mother, not me,"

was Percy's rejoinder, with a flushed cheek and eye sparkling with animation, as his mother read the passage to him.

"No such thing, Percy; I will not have you give me all the merit of your good deeds. I did but try to guide you, my boy; neither the disposition to receive, nor the fruit springing from the seeds I planted, is from me."

"They are, Mother, more than you are in the least aware of!" replied he, with even more than his usual impetuosity, for they happened to be quite alone; "I thought I knew all your worth before I went to Oxford, but I have mingled with the world now; I have been a silent listener and observer of such sentiments, such actions as I know would naturally have been mine, and though in themselves perhaps of little moment, saw they led to irregularity, laxity of principle and conduct, which *now* I cannot feel as other than actual guilt; and what saved me from the same? The *principle* which from my infancy you taught. I have questioned, led on in conversation, these young men to speak of their boyhood and their homes, and there were none guided, loved as I was; none whose parents had so blended firmness with indulgence, as while my wild free spirits were unchecked, prevented the ascendancy of evil. *I could not do* as they did. Mother! love you more perhaps I cannot, but every time I join the world, fresh from this home sanctuary, I must bless and venerate you more! To walk through this world with any degree of security man *must* have principle based on the highest source; and that principle can only be instilled by the constant

example of a mother and the associations of a home!" Mrs. Hamilton could not answer, but—a very unusual sign of weakness with her—tears of the most intense happiness poured down on the cheek of her son, as in his impetuosity he knelt before her, and ended his very unusual grave appeal, by the same loving caresses he was wont to lavish on her, in his infancy and boyhood.

The letters from Mr. Hamilton, of course, greatly increased the general hilarity, and the arrival of Mr. Grahame's family about the same time, added fresh zest to youthful enjoyment. In the few months she spent at Moorlands, Annie actually condescended to be agreeable. Percy, and some of Percy's boyish friends, now young men, as himself, were quite different to her usual society, and as she very well knew the only way to win Percy's even casual notice was to throw off her affectation and superciliousness as much as possible, she would do so, and be pleasing to an extent that surprised Mrs. Hamilton, who, always inclined to judge kindly, hoped more regarding Annie than she had done yet. Little could her pure mind conceive that, in addition to the pleasure of flirting with Percy, Annie acted in this manner actually to throw her off her guard, and so give her a wider field for her machinations when Caroline should enter the London world; a time to which, from her thirteenth year, she had secretly looked as the opportunity to make Caroline so conduct herself, as to cover her mother with shame and misery, and bring her fine plans of education to failure and contempt.

Mrs. Greville and Mary were also constantly at the Hall, or having their friends with them ; Herbert and Mary advancing in words or feelings not much farther than they had ever done as boy and girl, but still feeling and acknowledging to their mutual mothers that *next* to them, they loved each other better than all the world, and enjoyed each other's society more than any other pleasure which life could offer. Excursions by land or water, sometimes on horseback, sometimes in the carriages, constant little family reunions either at Oakwood, Moorlands, or Greville Manor, passed days and evenings most delightfully, to all but Ellen, who did not dare stay at home as often as inclination prompted, and whose forced gaiety when in society, did but increase the inward torture when alone. Mrs. Hamilton had as yet refrained from speaking to her—still trying to believe she must be mistaken, and there really was nothing strange about her. One morning, however, about a month after the young men had been at home, her attention was unavoidably arrested by hearing Percy gaily ask his cousin—

“Lelly, Tiny wrote me such a description of your birthday watch, that I quite forgot, I have been dying to see it all the time I have been at home ; show it me now, there's a dear ; it cannot be much use to you, that's certain, for I have never seen you take it from its hiding-place.”

Ellen answered, almost inarticulately, it was not in her power to show it him.

“Not in your power ! You must be dreaming, Lell, as I think you are very often now. Why, what do you

wear that chain and seal and key for, if you have not your watch on too?"

"Where is your watch, Ellen? and why, if you are not wearing it, do you make us suppose you are?" interrupted Mrs. Hamilton, startled out of all idea that Ellen was changed only in fancy.

Ellen was silent, and, to Percy's imagination, so sullenly and insolently so, that he became indignant.

"Did you hear my mother speak to you, Ellen? why don't you answer?"

"Because I thought my watch was my own to do what I liked with, to wear or to put away," was the reply; over neither words nor tone of which, had she at that moment any control, for in her agonized terror, she did not in the least know what she said.

"How dare you answer so, Ellen? Leave the room, or ask my mother's pardon at once," replied Percy, his eyes flashing with such unusual anger, that it terrified her still more, and under the same kind of spell she was turning to obey him, without attempting the apology he demanded.

"Stay, Ellen; this extraordinary conduct must not go on any longer without notice on my part. I have borne with it, I fear, too long already. Leave us, my dear Percy; I would rather speak with your cousin alone."

"I fear it will be useless, mother; what has come over Ellen, I *cannot* imagine, but I never saw such an incomprehensible change in my life."

He departed, unconscious that Ellen, who was near the door, transfixed at her aunt's words, made a rapid

movement as to catch hold of his arm, and that the words, "Do not go, Percy, for pity's sake!" trembled on her pale lips, but emitted no sound.

What passed in the interview, which lasted more than an hour, no one knew; but to the watchful eyes of her affectionate children, there were traces of very unusual disturbance on Mrs. Hamilton's expressive countenance when she rejoined them; and the dark rim round Ellen's eyes, the deadly pallor of her cheeks and lips, seemed to denote that it had not been deficient in suffering to her; though not one sign of penitence, one word of acknowledgment that she was, and had been for some weeks, in error, by her extraordinary conduct—not even a softening tear could her aunt elicit. She had never before so failed,—never, not even when the disappearance of her allowance had caused extreme displeasure, had Ellen evinced such an apparent sullen spirit of determined hardihood. She would not attempt defence or reply to the acted falsehood with which she was charged, of appearing to wear her watch when she did not, or to say what she had done with it. Mrs. Hamilton spoke to her till she was almost exhausted, for her own disappointment was most painful, and she had not a gleam of hope to urge her on. Her concluding words were these—

"That you are under the evil influence of some unconfessed and most heinous fault, Ellen, I am perfectly convinced; what it is time will reveal. I give you one month to decide on your course of action; subdue this sullen spirit, confess whatever error you may have been led into, and so change your conduct as to be

again the child I so loved, spite of occasional faults and errors, and I will pardon all that is past. If, at the end of a month, I find you persisting in the same course of rebellion and defiance, regardless alike of your duty to your God and to me, I shall adopt some measures to compel submission. I had hoped to bring up all my children under my own eye and by my own efforts; but if I am not permitted so to do, I know my duty too well to shrink from the alternative. You will no longer remain under my care; some severer guardian and more rigid discipline may bring you to a sense of your duty. I advise you to think well on this subject, Ellen; you know me too well, I think, to imagine that I speak in mere jest."

She had left the room as she spoke, so that if Ellen had intended reply, there was no time for it. But she could not have spoken. Go from Oakwood, and in anger! Yet it was but just; it was better, perhaps, than the lingering torture she was then enduring—better to hide her shame and misery amongst strangers, than remain amongst the good, the happy—the guilty wretch she was. She sat and thought till feeling itself became utterly exhausted, and again the spell, the stupor of indifference, crept over her. She would have confessed, but she knew that it could never satisfy, as the half confession she would have been compelled to make it; and the dread of herself, that she should betray her brother, sealed her lips.

Robert's story, and the strange disappearance of the notes, had of course been imparted to Percy and Herbert. In fact, the change in the young man from

being as light-hearted as his young master himself, to gravity and almost gloom, for the conviction of his master and mistress as to his innocence could not cheer him, while suspicion against him still actuated Morris, and many of the other servants, would have called the young men's attention towards him at once. The various paths and glades between the Hall and Mrs. Langford's cottage had been so searched, that unless the storm had destroyed them or blown the notes very far away, it seemed next to impossible, that they could not be found. Mr. Hamilton knew the number of each note, had told them to his wife, and gave notice at his banker's, that though he did not wish them stopped, he should like to know, if possible, when they had passed. No notice of such a thing had been sent to Oakwood, and it seemed curious that, if found and appropriated, they should not yet have been used, for ten weeks had now slipped away since their loss, and nearly nine since the letters had been sent to Edward and his captain, answers to which had not yet been received; but that was nothing remarkable, for Edward seldom wrote above once in three or four months.

It was nearing the end of August, when one afternoon Mrs. Hamilton was prevented joining her children in a sail up the Dart, though it had been a long promise, and Percy was in consequence excessively indignant; but certain matters relative to the steward's province demanded a reference to his mistress, and Morris was compelled to request a longer interview than usual. Ellen had chosen to join the aquatic party, a decision

now so contrary to her usual habits, that Mrs. Hamilton could not help fancying it was to prevent the chance of being any time alone with her. There had been no change in her manner, except a degree more care to control the disrespectful or pettish answer ; but nothing to give hope that the spirit was changing, and that the hidden error, whatever it might be, would be acknowledged and atoned. Mrs. Hamilton was nerving her own mind for the performance of the alternative she had placed before her niece ; passing many a sleepless night in painful meditations. If to send her from Oakwood were necessary, would it produce the effect she wished, with whom she could place her, and what satisfactory reason she could assign for doing so. She knew there would be a hundred tongues to cry shame on her for sending her orphan niece from her roof, but that was but one scarcely-tasted bitter drop in the many other sources of anxiety. But still these were but her nightly sorrows ; she might have been paler when she rose, but though her children felt quite sure that Ellen was grieving her exceedingly, her cheerful sympathy in their enjoyments and pursuits never waned for a moment.

Morris left her at six o'clock, all his business so satisfactorily accomplished, that the old man was quite happy, declaring to Ellis, he had always thought his mistress unlike any one else before ; but such a clear head for reducing difficult accounts and tangled affairs to order, he had never imagined could either be possessed by, or was any business of a woman. Not in the least aware of the wondering admiration she had

excited, Mrs. Hamilton had called Robert and proceeded to the schoolroom to get a pattern of embroidery and a note, which Caroline had requested might be sent to Annie Grahame that evening; the note was on the table, but the pattern and some silks she had neglected to put up till her brothers were ready, and they so hurried her, that her mother had promised she would see to it for her. The embroidery box was in a panelled closet of the schoolroom, rather high up, and in taking especial care to bring it safely down, Robert loosened a desk from its equilibrium, and it fell to the ground with such force as to break into several pieces, and scatter all its contents over the floor. It was Ellen's! the pretty rose-wood desk which had been her gift, that memorable New Year's Eve, and was now the repository of her dread secret. It was actually in fragments, especially where the ink-stands and pens had been, and the spring broken, the secret drawer burst open, and all its contents were disclosed. Robert was much too concerned to think of anything but his own extreme carelessness, and his mistress's reprimand; and he busied himself in hastily picking up the contents, and placing them carefully on the table preparatory to their arrangement by Mrs. Hamilton in a drawer of the table, which she was emptying for the purpose. She laid them carefully in, and was looking over a book of very nicely-written French themes, glad there was at least one thing for which she might be satisfied with Ellen, when an exclamation—

“Why, there is one of them! I am so glad,” and as

sudden a stop and half-checked groan from Robert startled her. She looked inquiringly at him, but he only covered his face with one hand, while the other remained quite unconsciously covering the secret drawer out of which the contents had not fallen, but were merely disclosed.

“What is the matter, Robert? what have you found to cause such contradictory exclamations? Speak, for God’s sake!” escaped from Mrs. Hamilton’s lips, for by that lightning touch of association, memory, thought, whatever it may be, which joins events together, and unites present with past, so that almost a life seems crowded in a moment, such a suspicion flashed upon her as to make her feel sick and giddy, and turn so unusually pale, as effectually to rouse Robert, and make him spring up to get her a chair.

“Nothing, Madam, indeed it can be nothing—I must be mistaken—I am acting like a fool this afternoon, doing the most unheard-of mischief, and then frightening you and myself at shadows.”

“This evasion will not do, Robert; give me the papers at which you were so startled.”

He hesitated, and Mrs. Hamilton extended her hand to take them herself; but her hand and arm so shook, that to hide it from her domestic, she let it quietly drop by her side, and repeated her command in a tone that brooked no farther delay. He placed the little drawer and its contents in her hand, and without a word withdrew into the farthest window. For full five, it might have been ten minutes, there was silence so deep, a pin-

fall might have been loudly heard. It was broken by Mrs. Hamilton.

“Robert!”

There was neither change nor tremor in the voice, but the fearful expression of forcibly-controlled suffering on her deathlike countenance so awed and terrified him, he besought her almost inarticulately to let him fetch a glass of water—wine—something—

“It is not at all necessary, my good boy; I am perfectly well. This is, I believe, the only note that can be identified as one of those you lost; these smaller ones (she pointed to three, of one, two, and four pounds each, which Ellen had received at long intervals from Mrs. Langford) have nothing to do with it?”

“No, Madam, and that—that may not—”

“We cannot doubt it, Robert, I have its number; I need not detain you, however, any longer. Take care of these broken fragments, and if they can be repaired, see that it is done. Here is Miss Hamilton’s note and parcel. I believe you are to wait for an answer, at all events inquire. I need not ask you to be silent on this discovery, till I have spoken to Miss Fortescue, or to trust my promise to make your innocence fully known.”

“Not by the exposure of Miss Ellen! Oh, Madam, this is but one of them, the smallest one—it may have come to her by the merest chance—see how stained it is with damp—for the sake of mercy, oh, Madam, spare her and yourself too!” and in the earnestness of his supplication Robert caught hold of her dress, hardly

knowing himself how he had found courage so to speak. His mistress's lip quivered.

"It is a kind thought, Robert, and if justice to you and mercy to the guilty can, by any extenuating clause unknown to me now, be united, trust me they shall. Now go."

He obeyed in silence, and still Mrs. Hamilton changed not that outward seeming of rigid calm. She continued to put every paper and letter away (merely retaining the notes), locked the drawer, took possession of the key, and then retired to her own room, where for half an hour she remained alone.

It is not ours to lift the veil from that brief interval. We must have performed our task badly indeed, if our readers cannot so enter into the lofty character, the inward strivings and outward conduct of Mrs. Hamilton, as not to imagine more satisfactorily to themselves than we could write it, the heart-crushing agony of that one half hour; and anguish as it was, it did but herald deeper. There was not even partial escape for her, as there would have been had her husband been at home. Examination of the culprit, whose mysterious conduct was so fatally explained, that she did not even dare hope this was the only missing note she had appropriated—compelled confession of the use to which it had been applied—public acknowledgment of Robert's perfect truth and innocence, all crowded on her mind like fearful spectres of pain and misery, from which there could be no escape, and from whom did they spring? Ellen! the child of her adoption, of

her love, whose character she had so tried to mould to good—whose young life she had so sought to make happier than its earliest years—for whom she had so hoped, so prayed—so trusted—had borne with anxiety and care ; tended in physical suffering with such untiring gentleness, such exhaustless love : and now !

CHAPTER V.

THE CULPRIT AND THE JUDGE.

It was nearly seven when the young party returned, delighted as usual with their afternoon's amusement; and Percy, shouting loudly for his mother, giving vent to an exclamation of impatience at finding she was still invisible.

"I shall wish Morris and all his concerns at the bottom of the Dart, if he is so to engross my mother when I want her," he said, as he flung himself full length on a couch in the music-room, desiring Emmeline to make haste and disrobe, as he must have an air on the harp to soothe his troubled spirit.

Herbert, to look for a poem, the beauty of which he had been discussing with Miss Harcourt, during their sail, entered the library, but perceiving his mother, would have retreated, thinking her still engaged; but she looked up as the door opened, and perceiving him, smiled, and asked him if they had had a pleasant afternoon. He looked at her earnestly, without making any reply, then approaching her, took one of her hands in his, and said, fondly—

"Forgive me, dearest Mother; I ought not perhaps

to ask, but I am sure something is wrong. You are ill—anxious—may I not share it? Can I do nothing?"

"Nothing, my Herbert; bless you for your watchful love—it is such comfort." And the long pressure of the hand which so warmly clasped hers, the involuntary tenderness with which these few words were said, betrayed how much she needed such comfort at that moment, but she rallied instantly. "Do not look so anxious, dear boy, I am not ill—not quite happy, perhaps, but we know where to look for strength to bear trial, Herbert! Wait tea for me till eight o'clock; it is probable I may be engaged till then;" and, satisfied that she did not wish to be more explicit, Herbert took his book, and somewhat sorrowfully left her.

Ten minutes more and the massive door unclosed again, but no step advanced, for the intruder remained rooted where the door had closed. It was a very large and lofty room, with an arched and gothic roof, of black and fretted oak, the walls and chimney-piece of the same material and most elaborate workmanship. A sort of dais, remnant of olden times, divided the upper part of the room by two or three steps from the lower. On this dais was the raised reading-desk of superbly carved oak, at which Mr. Hamilton officiated morning and evening, and two library tables of more modern workmanship stood on each side, but rather lower down. Except the massive oaken chairs and couches, and three or four curious tables scattered about, and the well filled bookcases, forming, to the height of five feet, the border as it were of the fretted woodwork of the walls, and filling up the niches formed by the win-

dows, the lower part of the hall, two thirds of the length, was comparatively unoccupied, showing its vast space and superb roof to still greater advantage. The magnificently stained windows, one on the dais, a deep oriel, threw such subdued light into the room, as accorded well with its other appointments; but as evening advanced, gave it that sort of soft holy light, which always impresses the spirit with a species of awe.

We do not think it was that feeling alone which so overpowered the second intruder, as to arrest her spell-bound on the threshold. Mrs. Hamilton was seated at one of the tables on the dais nearest the oriel window, the light from which fell full on her, giving her figure, though she was seated naturally enough in one of the large, maroon velvet, oaken chairs, an unusual effect of dignity and command, and impressing the terrified beholder with such a sensation of awe, that had her life depended on it, she could not for that one minute have gone forward; and even when desired to do so by the words—

“I desired your presence, Ellen, because I wished to speak to you; come here without any more delay,”—how she walked the whole length of that interminable room, and stood facing her aunt, she never knew.

Mrs. Hamilton for a full minute did not speak, but she fixed that searching look, to which we have once before alluded, upon Ellen's face; and then said, in a tone, which, though very low and calm, expressed as much as that earnest look—

“Ellen! is it necessary for me to tell you why you

are here — necessary to produce the proof that my words are right, and that you *have* been influenced by the fearful effects of some unconfessed and most heinous sin? Little did I dream its nature.”

For a moment Ellen stood as turned to stone, as white and rigid—the next she had sunk down with a wild bitter cry at Mrs. Hamilton’s feet, and buried her face in her hands.

“Is it true—can it be true—that you, offspring of my own sister, dear to me, cherished by me as my own child,—you have been the guilty one to appropriate, and conceal the appropriation of money, which has been a source of distress by its loss and the suspicion thence proceeding for the last seven weeks?—that you could listen to your uncle’s words, absolving his whole household as incapable of a deed which was actual theft, and yet by neither word nor sign betray remorse or guilt?—could behold the innocent suffering the fearful misery of suspicion, loss of character, without the power of clearing himself, and stand calmly, heedlessly by—only proving by your hardened and rebellious temper that all was not right within—Ellen, can this be true?”

“Yes!” was the reply, but with such a fearful effort, that her slight frame shook as with an ague; “thank God, that it is known! I dared not bring down the punishment on myself, but I can bear it.”

“This is mere mockery, Ellen; how dare I believe even this poor evidence of repentance, with the recollection of your past conduct? What were the notes you found?”

Ellen named them.

“Where are they?—This is but one, and the smallest.”

Ellen’s answer was scarcely audible.

“Used them—and for what?”

There was no answer, neither then, nor when Mrs. Hamilton sternly reiterated the question. She then demanded—

“How long have they been in your possession?”

“Five or six weeks,” but the reply was so tremulous, it carried no conviction with it.

“Since Robert told his story to your uncle, or before?”

“Before.”

“Then your last answer was a falsehood, Ellen; it is full seven weeks since my husband addressed the household on the subject. You could not have so miscounted time, with such a deed to date by. Where did you find them?”

Ellen described the spot.

“And what business had you there? You know that neither you nor your cousins are ever allowed to go that way to Mrs. Langford’s cottage, and more especially alone. If you wanted to see her, why did you not go the usual way? And when was this?—you must remember the exact day. Your memory is not in general so treacherous.”

Again Ellen was silent.

“Have you forgotten it?”

She crouched lower at her aunt’s feet, but the answer was audible—

“No.”

“Then answer me, Ellen, this moment, and distinctly ; for what purpose were you seeking Mrs. Langford’s cottage by that forbidden path, and when?”

“I wanted money, and I went to ask her to take my trinkets—my watch, if it must be—and dispose of them as I had read of others doing, as miserable as I was, and the wind blew the notes to my very hand, and I used them. I was mad then—I have been mad since, I believe ; but I would have returned the whole amount to Robert, if I could but have parted with my trinkets in time.”

To describe the tone of utter despair, the recklessness as to the effect her words would produce, is impossible. Every word increased Mrs. Hamilton’s bewilderment and misery. To suppose that Ellen did not feel was folly. It was the very depth of wretchedness which was crushing her to the earth, but every answered and unanswered question but deepened the mystery, and rendered her judge’s task more difficult.

“And when was this, Ellen? I will have no more evasion—tell me the exact day.”

But she asked in vain. Ellen remained moveless, and silent as the dead. After several minutes, Mrs. Hamilton removed her hands from her face, and compelling her to lift up her head, gazed searchingly on her deathlike countenance for some moments in utter silence, and then said, in a tone that Ellen never in her life forgot—

“You cannot imagine, Ellen, that this half-confession will either satisfy me, or in the very smallest degree re-

deem your sin. One and one only path is open to you, for all that you have said and left unsaid but deepens your apparent guilt, and so blackens your conduct, that I can scarcely believe I am addressing the child I so loved—and could still so love, if but one real sign be given of remorse and penitence—one hope of returning truth. But that sign, that hope, can only be a full confession. Terrible as is the guilt of appropriating so large a sum, granted it came by the merest chance into your hand; dark as is the additional sin of concealment when an innocent person was suffering,—something still darker, more terrible, must be concealed behind it, or you would not, could not, continue thus obdurately silent. I can believe that under some heavy pressure of misery, some strong excitement, the sum might have been used without thought, and that fear might have prevented the confession of anything so dreadful; but what was this heavy necessity for money, this strong excitement? What fearful and mysterious difficulties have you been led into to call for either? Tell me the truth, Ellen, the whole truth; let me have some hope of saving you and myself the misery of publicly declaring you the guilty one, and so proving Robert's innocence. Tell me what difficulty, what misery so maddened you, as to demand the disposal of your trinkets. If there be the least excuse, the smallest possibility of your obtaining in time forgiveness, I will grant it. I will not believe you so utterly fallen. I will do all I can to remove error, and yet to prevent suffering; but to win this, I *must have* a full confession—every question that I put to you must be clearly and satisfactorily an-

swered, and so bring back the only comfort to yourself, and hope to me. Will you do this, Ellen?"

"Oh, that I could!" was the reply in such bitter anguish, Mrs. Hamilton actually shuddered. "But I cannot—must not—dare not. Aunt Emmeline, hate me, condemn me to the severest, sharpest suffering; I wish for it, pine for it: you cannot loathe me more than I do myself, but do not—do not speak to me in these kind tones—I cannot bear them. It was because I knew what a wretch I am, that I have so shunned you, I was not worthy to be with you; oh, sentence me at once! I dare not answer as you wish."

"Dare not!" repeated Mrs. Hamilton, more and more bewildered, and, to conceal the emotion Ellen's wild words and agonized manner had produced, adopting greater sternness. "You dare commit a sin, from which the lowest of my household would shrink in horror, and yet tell me you dare not make the only atonement, give me the only proof of real penitence, I demand. This is a weak and wicked subterfuge, Ellen, and will not pass with me. There can be no reason for this fearful obduracy, not even the consciousness of greater guilt, for I promise forgiveness, if it be possible, on the sole condition of a full confession. Once more, will you speak? Your hardihood will be utterly useless, for you cannot hope to conquer me; and if you permit me to leave you with your conduct still clothed in this impenetrable mystery, you will compel me to adopt measures to subdue that defying spirit, as will expose you and myself to intense suffering, but which *must* force submission at last."

“You cannot inflict more than I have endured the last seven weeks,” murmured Ellen, almost inarticulately. “I have borne that, I can bear the rest.”

“Then you will not answer? You are resolved not to tell me the day on which you found that money, the use to which it was applied, the reason of your choosing that forbidden path, permitting me to believe you guilty of heavier sins than may be the case in reality. Listen to me, Ellen; it is more than time this interview should cease, but I will give you one chance more. It is now half-past seven,”—she took the watch from her neck, and laid it on the table—“I will remain here one half hour longer: by that time this sinful temper may have passed away, and you will consent to give me the confession I demand. I cannot believe you so altered in two months as to choose obduracy and misery, when pardon, and in time confidence and love, are offered in their stead. Get up from that crouching posture, it can be but mock humility, and so only aggravates your sin.”

Ellen rose slowly and painfully, and seating herself at the table, some distance from her aunt, leaned her arms upon it, and buried her face within them. Never before, and never after, did half an hour appear so interminable to either Mrs. Hamilton or Ellen. It was well for the firmness of the former perhaps, that she could not read the heart of that young girl, even if the cause of its anguish had been still concealed. Again and again did the wild longing, turning her actually faint and sick with its agony, come over her to reveal the whole, to ask but rest and mercy for herself, pardon and security

for Edward, but then clear as held before her in letters of fire she read every word of her brother's desperate letter, particularly "Breathe it to my uncle or aunt, for if she knows it, he will, and you will never see me more." Her mother, pallid as death, seemed to stand before her, freezing confession on her heart and lips, looking at her threateningly, as she had so often seen her, as if the very thought were guilt. The rapidly advancing twilight, the large and lonely room, all added to that fearful illusion, and if Ellen did succeed in praying, it was with desperate fervour for strength, not to betray her brother. If ever there were a martyr spirit, it was enshrined in that young frail form.

But how could Mrs. Hamilton imagine this? How could her wildest fancy bring Edward—the brave, happy, eager Edward, of whom captain, officers, and crew wrote in such terms of praise and admiration, who had never given cause for anxiety, and who was so far distant—as the uniting link to this terrible mystery? Was it not more natural that he should not enter the incongruous and painful thoughts floating through her brain, save as her last resource, by his influence to obtain the truth from Ellen? The more she thought, the more agonizing her thoughts became; what could induce this determined silence but a conviction of deeper guilt, and what could that guilt be? The most terrible suspicions crossed her mind; she had heard, though she had scarcely believed in them, of entanglements, even where the guardianship had been most rigid. Could one so young, seemingly so innocent, have fallen into the power of some desperate character, who was

working on her thus? How could she be sure she intended to take her trinkets to Mrs. Langford? Her choosing that forbidden path which was never by any chance trodden by the family or their friends, her constant desire lately not to join them in their excursions, preferring, and often finding some excuse to remain alone—all came to Mrs. Hamilton's mind with such an overpowering sensation of dread and misery, that the worst guilt Ellen could have avowed would scarcely have been worse than anticipation pictured; and yet every thought was so vague, every fancy so undefined—there was nothing she could grasp at as a saving hope, or in the remotest degree excusing cause; such obdurate silence in one so young, generally so yielding, could and must conceal nothing but still more fearful sin. The darkness which had gathered round them, save the brightening light of the harvest moon, suddenly awakened her to the lapse of time. The moonlight fell full on the face of the watch, which was a repeater. It wanted but three minutes more, and Mrs. Hamilton watched the progress of the hand with such sickening dread, that when it reached the hour, she had scarcely strength to strike it, and so give notice—for words she had none—that the hour of grace had passed. But she conquered the powerlessness, and those soft chimes which, when Ellen first came to Oakwood, had been such a constant source of childish wonder and delight, now rang in her ears louder, hoarser, more fearfully distinct than even those of the ancient time-piece in the hall, which at the same moment rang out the hour of eight.

The sounds ceased, and with heightened dignity, but in perfect silence, Mrs. Hamilton rose, passed her niece, and had nearly reached the door, when she paused, and turned towards Ellen, as if irresolute. Ellen's eyes had watched her as in fascination, and the pause endowed her with just sufficient power to spring forward, fling herself at her aunt's feet, and clasping her knees with all her little remaining strength, passionately implore—

“Aunt Emmeline, Aunt Emmeline, speak to me but one word, only one word of kindness before you go. I do not ask for mercy, there can be none for such a wretch as I am; I will bear without one complaint, one murmur, all you may inflict—you cannot be too severe. Nothing can be such agony as the utter loss of your affection; I thought the last two months, that I feared you so much, that it was all fear, no love, but now, now that you know my sin, it has all, all come back, to make me still more wretched,” and before Mrs. Hamilton could prevent, or was in the least aware of her intention, Ellen had obtained possession of one of her hands, and was covering it with kisses, while her whole frame shook with those convulsed but completely tearless sobs.

“Will you confess, Ellen, if I stay? Will you give me the proof that it *is* such agony to lose my affection, that you *do* love me as you profess, and that it is only one sin which has so changed you? one word, and, tardy as it is, I will listen, and if I can, forgive.”

Ellen made no answer, and Mrs. Hamilton's newly-

raised hopes vanished ; she waited full two or three minutes, then gently disengaged her hand and dress from Ellen's still convulsive grasp ; the door closed with a sullen, seemingly unwilling sound, and Ellen was alone. She remained in the same posture, the same spot, till a vague cold terror so took possession of her, that the room seemed filled with ghostly shapes, and all the articles of furniture suddenly transformed to things of life ! and springing up with the wild fleet step of fear, she paused not till she found herself in her own room, where, flinging herself on her bed, she buried her face on her pillow, to shut out every object—oh, how she longed to shut out thought !

It was such a different scene, such a fulness of innocent joy, on which Mrs. Hamilton entered, that though she thought herself nerved to control all visible emotion, the contrast almost overpowered her ; knowing, too, that the fatal effects of one person's sin must banish that innocent enjoyment, and would fall on them all as some fearful, joy-destroying blow. The room, one of the least spacious, was cheerfully lighted, the urn hissing on the table, at which Caroline as usual was presiding, only waiting for her mother's appearance to satisfy Percy, who was loudly declaring he was famished in two senses, for want of his mother's company, and of some restorative for his craving appetite. He was lounging on the sofa, playing with Emmeline's flowing ringlets, as she sat on a low stool by his side, chatting with him, in as discursive a strain as his fancy willed. Herbert and Miss Harcourt were still in earnest discussion on their poem, from

which Herbert was occasionally reading aloud such beautiful passages, and with such richness of intonation and variety of expression, that Caroline, and even Percy and Emmeline, would pause involuntarily to listen.

“At length!” exclaimed Percy, springing up, as did Herbert at the same moment, to get their mother a chair, and place her comfortably as usual in the midst of them. “Mother, I really did begin to think you intended to punish my impatience by not joining us at all to-night.”

“I did not know you were impatient, my dear boy, or perhaps I might have done so!” was her quiet and even smiling reply. “I fear, indeed, waiting for me so long after a water-excursion, must have caused you to be impatient in another sense.”

“What! that we must be all famished? I assure you, we are, and the loss of your society sharpened the pangs of hunger. I owe Morris a grudge, and will certainly serve him out one day, for detaining you so long when I wanted you.”

“It was not Morris, that detained me,” answered Mrs. Hamilton, somewhat hurriedly. “I had done with him by six o’clock; but come, tell me something about your excursion,” she added, evidently anxious to elude farther remark, and perceiving at once that Miss Harcourt and Herbert both looked at her very anxiously. “How did your boat go, and how did Caroline’s voice and your flute sound on the water, Percy? Herbert, I see, has found poetry, as usual, and made Miss Harcourt his

companion ; you must tell me what verses our beautiful river recalled this afternoon ; and you, Emmy, have you any more sketches to fill up ?”

Her children eagerly entered on their day's enjoyment—Herbert conquering his anxiety to emulate his mother's calmness, but Miss Harcourt had been too painfully startled by the unusual expression of forcibly-controlled suffering on her friend's face, to do so with any success. Nearly an hour, however, passed animatedly as usual ; each found so much to tell, and Percy was in such wild spirits, that it was utterly impossible for there to be anything like a pause. Tea had always been a favorite meal at Oakwood, as bringing all the family together after the various business of the day, and it continued to be so. They had lingered over it as usual, when Caroline suddenly exclaimed—

“What has become of Ellen ? I had quite forgotten her till this moment ; how neglectful she will think us ! Do ring the bell, Percy, that we may send and let her know.”

“If she has no recollection of meal-time, I really think we need not trouble ourselves about her,” was Percy's half-jesting half-earnest reply, for Ellen's changed manner to his mother had made him more angry with her, and for a longer time together than he had ever been with anybody, especially a woman, in his life. He stretched out his hand, however, to ring the bell, but Mrs. Hamilton stopped him.

“You need not, Percy, your cousin will not wish to join us,” she said ; and her tone was now so expressive

of almost anguish, that every one of that happy party startled and looked at her with the most unfeigned alarm, and Percy, every thought of jest and joyousness checked, threw his arms round her, exclaiming—

“Mother, dearest! what *has* happened?—that unhappy girl again! I am sure it is. Why do you not cast her off from your heart at once; she will bring you nothing but sorrow for all your love.”

“Percy, how can you be so harsh?—how unlike you!” exclaimed Emmeline, indignantly, as Mrs. Hamilton’s head for a few minutes of natural weakness sunk on her son’s encircling arm. “We have all given Mamma trouble and pain enough one time or other, and what would have become of us if she had cast us off? and Ellen has no mother, too—for shame!”

“Hush!” answered Percy, almost sternly, for there were times when he could quite throw off the boy. “This is no light or common matter to affect my mother thus. Shall we send for Mr. Howard, mother?” he continued, fondly; “in my father’s absence he is your ablest friend—we can only feel, not counsel.”

But there are times when feeling can aid in bringing back control and strength, when counsel alone would seem so harsh and cold, we can only weep before it; and the fond affection of her children, the unusual assumption of protecting manliness in Percy, so touchingly united with the deep respect that prevented the least intrusive question as to the cause of her distress till she chose to reveal it, gave her power to send back the tears that had at first escaped so hot and fast, and

though still holding his hand, as if its very pressure was support, she was enabled calmly to relate the fatal discovery of that evening. Its effect was, in truth, as if a thunderbolt had fallen in the midst of them. An execration, forcibly checked, but passionate as his nature, burst from the lips of Percy, as he clasped his arm close round his mother, as thus to protect her from the misery he felt himself. Herbert, with a low cry of pain, buried his face in his hands. Caroline, shocked and bewildered, but her first thought for her mother, could only look at, and feel for her, quite forgetting that her every prejudice against Ellen did indeed seem fulfilled. Emmeline at first looked stunned, then sinking down at Mrs. Hamilton's feet, hid her face on her lap and sobbed with such uncontrolled violence, that it might have seemed as if she herself, not Ellen, were the guilty cause of all this misery. Miss Harcourt, like Caroline, could only think and feel for Mrs. Hamilton ; for she knew so well, all the hope, interest, and love which Ellen had excited, and what must be the bitter suffering of this fearful disappointment.

“Do not weep thus, love,” Mrs. Hamilton said, addressing Emmeline, after nearly a quarter of an hour had passed, and the various emotions of each individual had found vent in words well illustrative of their respective characters ; all but Emmeline, who continued to sob so painfully, that her mother successfully forgot her own sorrow to comfort her. “Ellen is still very young, and though she is giving us all this misery and disappointment now, she may become all we can wish

her by and by. We must not give up all hope, because now all my cares seem so blighted. There is some fatal mystery attached to her conduct; for I am indeed deceived if she is not very wretched, and there is some hope in that."

"Then why does she not speak?" rejoined Percy, impetuously; for when he found his mother resuming control and firmness, he had given vent to his own indignation by striding hastily up and down the room. "What but the most determined hardihood and wickedness can keep her silent, when you promise forgiveness if she will but speak? What mystery can there or ought there to be about her, when she has such an indulgent friend as yourself to bring all her troubles to? Wretched! I hope she is, for she deserves to be, if it were only for her base ingratitude."

"Percy! dear Percy! do not speak and judge so very harshly," interposed Herbert, with deep feeling; "there does, indeed, seem no excuse for her conduct, but if we ever should find that there is some extenuating clause, how unhappy we shall be for having judged her still more harshly than she deserved."

"It is impossible we can do that," muttered Percy, continuing his angry walk. "Nothing, but guilt can be the cause of her keeping anything from my mother. Ellen knows, as we all know, that even error when confessed, has always been forgiven, sorrow always soothed, and every difficulty removed. What can her silence spring from then, but either defying obstinacy or some blacker sin?"

“It does seem like it, unhappily,” rejoined Caroline, but very sorrowfully, not at all as if she triumphed in her own previous penetration; “but she cannot persevere in it long. Dear Mamma, do not look so distressed: it is impossible she can resist you for any length of time.”

“She has resisted every offer of kindness, my dear child, and it is the difficulty as to what course to pursue, to compel submission and confession, that so grieves and perplexes me.”

“Let me seek Mr. Howard, dearest Mother,” answered Herbert; “he is so good, so kind, even in his severest judgments, that I really think Ellen will scarcely be able to persevere in her mistaken silence, if he speak to her.”

Mrs. Hamilton paused for some moments in thought.

“I believe you are right, Herbert. If I must have counsel out of my own family, I cannot go to a kinder, wiser, or more silent friend. If the fearful shame which I must inflict on Ellen to-night of proving Robert’s innocence before my whole household, by the denouncement of her guilt, have no effect in softening her, I will appeal to him.”

“Oh, Mamma, must this be—can you not, will you not, spare her this?” implored Emmeline, clinging to her mother, in passionate entreaty; “it would kill me, I know it would. Do not—do not expose her to such shame.”

“Do you think it is no suffering to my mother to be called upon to do this, Emmeline, that you add to it by

this weak interference?" replied Percy, sternly, before his mother could reply. "Shame! she has shamed us all enough. There wants little more to add to it."

But Emmeline's blue eyes never moved from her mother's face, and Miss Harcourt, longing to spare Mrs. Hamilton the suffering of such a proceeding, tried to persuade her to evade it, but she did not succeed.

"One word of confession—one evidence that her sin originated in a momentary temptation, that it conceals nothing darker—one real proof of penitence, and God knows how gladly I would have spared myself and her; but as it is, Lucy, Emmeline, do not make my duty harder."

Few as these words were, the tone that spoke them was enough. No more was said, and Mrs. Hamilton tried, but with very little success, to turn her children's thoughts to other and pleasanter things. Time seemed to lag heavily, and yet when the prayer bell sounded, it fell on every heart as some fearful knell which must have been struck too soon.

All were assembled in the library, and in their respective places, all but one, and Herbert waited her appearance.

"Tell Miss Fortescue that we are only waiting for her to commence prayers;" and Fanny, the young ladies' attendant, departed to obey, wondering at Miss Ellen's non-appearance, but hearing nothing unusual in her mistress's voice. She returned, but still they waited; again the door unclosed, and Emmeline bent forward in an attitude of agony and shame, unable even to look at her cousin, whose place was close beside her;

but the words she dreaded came not then, Herbert, at his mother's sign, commenced the service, and it proceeded as usual. The fearful struggle in Mrs. Hamilton's gentle bosom who might read, save the all-pitying God, whom she so fervently addressed for strength and guidance? The voice of her son ceased, and the struggle was over.

"Before we part for the night," she said, when all but one had arisen, "it is necessary that the innocent should be so justified before you all, that he should no longer be injured by suspicion and avoidance. It is nearly two months since your master assured you of his own and of my perfect conviction that Robert Langford had told the truth, and that the missing notes had been unfortunately lost by him; not appropriated, as I fear most of you have believed, and are still inclined to do. The complete failure of every search for them has induced a very uncomfortable feeling amongst you all as to the person on whom suspicion of finding and appropriating them might fall, none but the household frequenting that particular path; and none being able to suppose that the storm could have so dispersed as to lose all trace of them. I acknowledge it was unlikely, but not so unlikely as that Robert Langford should have failed in honesty, or that any of my household should have appropriated or concealed them. All mystery is now, however, at an end; the missing notes have been traced and found, and that all suspicion and discomfort may be removed from among you, it becomes my duty to designate the individual who has thus transgressed every duty to God and man, not

by the sin alone, but by so long permitting the innocent to suffer for the guilty, more especially as that individual is one of my own family"—for one moment she paused, whether to gain strength, or to give more force to her concluding words, no one could tell —“ELLEN FORTESCUE!”

CHAPTER VI.

THE SENTENCE, AND ITS EXECUTION.

THE excitement which reigned in the servants' hall, after they had withdrawn in the most respectful silence from the library, was extreme. Robert, utterly unable to realize relief in this proof of his own innocence, could only pace the hall in agony, deploring his mad carelessness, which, by exposing to temptation, had caused it all; and Morris and Ellis deepened the remorse by perfectly agreeing with him. Before they separated, the old steward called them all together; and, his voice trembling with agitation, the tears actually running down his furrowed cheeks, told them that even as their mistress had done her duty to the utmost, ay, more than the utmost by them—for it must have wellnigh broken her heart to do it—a solemn duty was demanded from them to her, and that if either man, woman, or child failed in it, he should know that they had neither feeling, honour, nor gratitude in their hearts, and deserved and should be scouted by them all; and that duty was never to let the event of that night pass their lips, even to each other. It was enough that all mystery and suspicion had been taken from them, and

that time would clear up the remainder ; he never would believe the grandchild of his mistress's father, one she had so loved and cared for, could wilfully act as appearances seemed to say ; that he was sure one day or other they would all find there was much more to pity than to blame ; and till then, if they had the least spark of generous or grateful feeling, they would forget the whole affair, and only evince their sense of their mistress's conduct, by yet greater respect and attention to their respective duties.

The old man's speech was garrulous, and perhaps often faulty in grammar, but it came from the heart, and so went to the heart at once, and not one held back from the pledge of silence he demanded. There are some who imagine that the refinement of feeling which alone could actuate Morris's speech, and its warm and immediate response, is only to be found among the educated and the rich : how little those who thus suppose understand the human heart ! Kindness begets kindness, and if superiors will but think of, and seek the happiness, temporal and eternal, of their inferiors,—will but prove that they are considered as children of one common Father,—there needs no equality of rank to create equality of happiness, or equality of refined, because *true* feeling.

The next morning, when Mrs. Hamilton had occasion to speak to Morris about some farm receipts, which had not been forthcoming the preceding day, she recalled him as he was departing, but the words she had to say seemed unusually difficult, for her voice audibly faltered, and her face was completely shaded by her

hand. It was simply to ask that which Morris's loving reverence had already done ; and when the old man, in those earnest accents of heartfelt respect and kindness which never can be mistaken, related what had passed, his mistress hastily extended her hand to him, saying, in a tone he never forgot—

“ God bless you, Morris ! I ought to have known your love for your master's house would have urged this, without any request from me. I cannot thank you enough.” The kiss he ventured to press upon the delicate hand which pressed his rough palm, was not unaccompanied, though he did force back the tear, and most respectfully, yet very earnestly, beseech his mistress not to take on too much. There must be some cause, some mystery ; no one belonging to her could so have acted without some very fearful temptation, some very powerful reason, and it would all come straight one day.

But whatever the future, the present was only suffering ; for, to obtain a full confession from Ellen, Mrs. Hamilton felt so absolutely incumbent on her, that she steadily refused to listen to either pity or affection, which could shake her firmness, and the opinion and advice of Mr. Howard strengthened the determination. He had a private interview with Ellen, but it was attended with so very little success, that he left her far more bewildered and grieved than he had sought her ; but fully convinced, it was mere hardihood and obstinacy, which caused her incomprehensible and most guilty silence. Not even allowing, as Mrs. Hamilton had, that there was any evidence of misery and remorse ; perhaps she had been more quiet, more resolutely calm, but if it had not been for the strong appear-

ances against her, he surely must have seen, it was the strength and quiet of despair, not the defiance he believed.

"This rebellious spirit must be conquered," he said, on rejoining Mrs. Hamilton, who, with her children and Miss Harcourt, had most anxiously and yet hopefully waited the result of his interference. "We should actually be sharing her sin, if we permit her to conquer us by obduracy and self-will. Solitary confinement and complete idleness may bring her to a better temper, and, in fact, should be persisted in, till a full confession be made. If that fail, my dear Mrs. Hamilton, your niece should be banished from Oakwood. She must not remain here, a continual source of anxiety and misery to you, and of successful hardihood to herself; but of that there will be time enough to think when you have an answer from Mr. Hamilton; his judgment from a distance may be wiser than ours on the spot, and irritated as we are by such unaccountable obstinacy, in one we have always thought almost too yielding."

And it was this incomprehensible change of character in seeming, that still more perplexed Mrs. Hamilton, and so made her believe there must be some worse fault, or dangerous entanglement, demanding such resolute pertinacity in concealment.

Closely connected with Ellis's private apartments, and having neither inlet nor outlet, save through the short passage, opening from her sitting-room, were two small but not uncomfortable apartments, opening one into the other, and looking out on a very pretty but quite unfrequented part of the park. They had often been used when any of Ellis's children or grandchildren came to

see her, and were in consequence almost sufficiently habitable without any further preparation, except the turning one into a sitting-room, which Ellis's active care speedily accomplished. Her mistress inspected them, at her desire, suggested one or two additional comforts, and then held a long confidential conversation with her. She had such perfect confidence in her (for Ellis had been from a child,—married, and become mother and widow, and married her children,—all as an inmate of the Hamilton family, and had held the confidential post of housekeeper for sixteen years) that she did not hesitate one moment to commit Ellen entirely to her care, at least till she could receive an answer about her from her husband. She depended on her to watch over her health, to see that she took daily exercise with her; in those parts of the park where she was not likely to attract notice, as being with her instead of with any member of her family, and that she took her regular meals; to be with her whenever she took them, and at casual times in the day, not so as to remove the impression of solitude and disgrace, but to be enabled to watch her closely, and the least symptom of a softening spirit to report instantly to her.

“She will of course join us in the hours of devotion, though not occupying her usual place, for she who has lowered herself in the sight of God and man, beneath the humblest of my domestics, may no longer kneel above them,” she had said in conclusion. “But of my determination on that point she is already aware; and she will go with us as usual to church, I will have no remark made further than I can possibly avoid. Be as

kind to her as you can, Ellis, consistent with your character of a wise and watchful guardian. God in mercy grant that her heart may be so softened, that you will not fill that painful position long.—And now to see her.”

But Percy’s watchful care had so quietly interposed, that his mother found herself in their usual sitting-room, and in the midst of them all, before she could seek Ellen; and when, with half reproach, she told him, that she had still a most painful duty to accomplish, therefore he ought not to have prevented it, he answered impetuously—

“Mother, you shall not see Ellen any more alone! she has made you miserable enough already, and each time that she sees you, her deceitful appearance of remorse and suffering, for they *cannot* be real, or she would speak, but add to it; send for her here, and tell her your decision before us all.”

And Mrs. Hamilton complied, for she felt as if her firmness would be less likely to fail, than if Ellen attempted anything like supplication with her alone. But not a word of supplication came. Ellen had answered the summons, by quietly accompanying Ellis, who had been sent for her, to her aunt’s presence, pale, indeed, as marble, but so tearless and still, as to seem unmoved. An expression of actual relief stole over her features as she heard her sentence, undisturbed even when told that this would only be, till Mr. Hamilton’s sentence came; as if she continued silent until then, of course whatever severer measures he might dictate would be instantly obeyed. But when Mrs. Hamilton proceeded to

say that she intended writing the whole affair to Edward, that his influence might awaken her to a sense of the fearfully aggravated guilt, she was incurring by her silence, an expression of the most intense agony succeeded the previous calm, and sinking down before her, Ellen wildly implored—

“Oh, Aunt Emmeline, in mercy spare him! do not, oh, do not throw such shame upon him, he who is so brave, admired, honoured! do not, oh, if you have any pity left, do not make him hate me, loathe me too, my own only brother! he must throw me off. How can he bear such shame upon his name! Oh, do with me more than you have said, anything, everything, but that, spare him!”

“Spare him yourself,” interposed Percy, sternly. (He was standing, with his arms crossed, by a window; Herbert was leaning at the back of Mrs. Hamilton’s chair; Caroline and Miss Harcourt trying very steadily to work, and Emmeline bending over a drawing, which her tears were utterly spoiling.)

“If the knowledge of your sin make him miserable, as it must, be yourself the one to save him—you alone can.—Speak,—break this determined and most guilty silence, and his influence will not be needed, and my mother will be silent to him concerning what has passed, now and for ever, as we will all. If you so love him, spare him the shame you have brought on all of us; if not, it is mere words, as must be the love you have professed all these years for my mother.”

Ellen turned her face towards him for a single minute, with such an expression of unutterable misery, that he

turned hastily away, even his anger in part subdued, and Mrs. Hamilton could scarcely reply.

“I cannot grant your request, Ellen, for to refuse it appears to me the only means of softening you. It may be a full fortnight before I can write to Edward, for we must receive letters first. If during that interval you choose to give me the only proof of repentance that can satisfy me, or bring the least hope of returning happiness to yourself, I shall know how to act. I would indeed spare your brother this bitter shame, but if you continue thus obdurate, no entreaties will move me. Rise, and go with Ellis. Punishment and misery, repentance and pardon, are all before you ; you alone can choose. I shall interfere no more, till your uncle’s sentence comes.” And longing to end this painful scene, for her mistress’s sake, Ellis led Ellen from the room, and conducted her to the apartments assigned her. She felt much too angry and annoyed at the pain and trouble Ellen was giving her mistress, to evince anything like kindness towards her at first, but she had not been under her care above a week before her feelings underwent a complete change.

Suffering as she was enduring, more especially from the conviction, that to every one of those she loved (for affection for each one of the family had now returned with almost passionate violence) she must be an object of hate and loathing, yet that her sin was known, was a relief so inexpressibly blessed, she felt strengthened to endure everything else. She knew, and her God knew, the agonized temptation to the momentary act, and the cause of her determined silence. She felt there was

strange comfort in that; though she knew no punishment could be too severe for the sin itself, and she prayed constantly to be enabled to bear it, and still not to betray her brother; and the consequence of these petitions was a calm, gentle, deeply submissive demeanour. Not a murmur ever passed her lips, and Ellis scarcely ever saw the signs of tears, which she longed for; for the quiet, but fearfully intense suffering, Ellen's very evident daily portion, alarmed her for its effect upon her always delicate health. As yet, however, there was no outward appearance of its failing, it rather bore up from the cessation of the nervous dread, and constant terror which she had endured before; and before Mr. Hamilton's letter arrived, a month after the fatal discovery, Ellis had drawn her own conclusions, and her manner, instead of being distant and cold, had become so excessively kind and feeling, that the poor girl felt some heavy change must be impending, she dared not look to the continuance of such comfort.

But Mrs. Hamilton never saw her niece, save when no words could pass between them; and she could not judge as Ellis did. She could only feel, as each day passed, without bringing the desired proof of sorrow and amendment, more and more bewildered, and very wretched. Though, for her children's sake, she so conquered the feeling as, after the first week, to restore cheerfulness, and promote the various amusements they had all so enjoyed. Ellen's disappearance had of course to be accounted for, to the intimate friends with whom they so constantly were; but her acknowledgment that she had been disappointed in her, and that her conduct

would not allow her any social or domestic indulgence, at least for a time, satisfied the elder members. Annie, for the first time, discovered that Caroline was her match in cleverness, merely from her excessive truth and simplicity, and that manœuvre as she might, she could not discover the smallest clue to this sudden mystery. And Mary, for the first time, and on this one subject alone, found Herbert and Emmeline impenetrably reserved.

As soon as Mrs. Langford had been informed by her son, at his mistress's desire, of the unanswerable proof of his innocence, she hastened to the Hall, and requesting a private interview with Mrs. Hamilton, placed at once in her hands all the trinkets and watch, with which she had been at different times intrusted; related all that had passed between her and Miss Fortescue, the excessive misery she seemed to be enduring; and confessed that the few pounds she had given her, as the sums obtained by the sale of the trinkets, she had advanced herself, having resolved that nothing should induce her to dispose of them, and that of course it was the difficulty she had in advancing their right value, which had occasioned the length of time that had elapsed since Ellen had first sought her.

"Would it not go far to prove she really did wish to return the money?" Mrs. Hamilton thought, long after the widow had left her, and the sums she had advanced returned with interest. "Was it to return the fatally appropriated sum, or because she needed more? Ellen had so positively, and with such agony asserted the first, that it was scarcely possible to disbelieve her; but

what was this fearful difficulty, this pressing demand by one so young for so much money? Why, if it were comparatively innocent, would she not speak?" The more she thought the more perplexed and anxious she seemed to become. The act itself of endeavouring to dispose of the trinkets, especially those that had been given and received, as doubly valuable because they had been worn by her mother, would have been sufficiently faulty to have occasioned natural displeasure, but compared with other known and unknown faults, it sunk into almost nothing. Mrs. Hamilton collected them all together, those Mrs. Langford had returned, and the few remaining in her niece's drawer, and carefully put them away, till circumstances might authorise her returning them to Ellen, and determined on saying nothing more on the subject either to Ellen or her own family.

One thing Ellis reported to her regarding Ellen, which certainly seemed like a consciousness of the wrong she had done Robert, and a wish to atone for it. She begged Ellis so earnestly that she might see him, if it were only for five minutes, that she could not resist her, and when he came, she implored him so touchingly, so pleadingly, to forgive her long silence himself, and entreat his mother to do so too; assuring him, that it was the hope of being able to restore the notes to him, without revealing her identity, which had caused the silence, that it was scarcely possible to listen to her unmoved. It was no false humility, but the deepest, most unfeigned contrition for having been the cause of injury.

Ten days after Ellen's imprisonment, the letter

arrived from Sir Edward Manly, which Mrs. Hamilton had alluded to as necessary to be received, before she could write to her nephew, and the news it brought, though somewhat alloyed, would at another time have been received with the greatest delight. Edward was returning. In three weeks, or a month the utmost, after the receipt of his commander's letter, he might be with them all; invalided home for a three or four months' leave. There had been another and rather severe engagement, in which young Fortescue had still more distinguished himself; but from his headlong courage had been severely, but not at all seriously, hurt. Sir Edward intended sending the pirate frigate which they had taken, to England, as she was a tight-built, well-looking craft enough, he wrote, if manned with honorable men instead of desperate villains; and had nominated Harding and Fortescue to accompany the second lieutenant, as her officers.

The name of Harding produced no disagreeable reminiscences in Mrs. Hamilton's mind. It had been so very long since Edward had even mentioned him, that she had almost forgotten his early fancy for him. Her only thought now was thankfulness that her gallant nephew had been preserved, and that he was coming home. It could scarcely be pleasure she felt, though all the young party did, for there was such an excitement in Edward's courage, and in his having been in two desperate engagements, and seen so much, that with the buoyancy happily natural to well-disposed youth, they could only think and talk of his return, forgetting the alloy that must cloud it. Percy and Herbert hoped he would

arrive within the three weeks, as then they should be with him at least a week or ten days. If delayed, he would very provokingly just arrive, as they would be returning to college.

After much painful deliberation, Mrs. Hamilton determined on making Herbert her messenger with these unexpected tidings to Ellen; hoping more than she expressed that his gentle eloquence in bringing before her the misery to which she must condemn her brother if she would persist in this silence, and so compel an appeal to him, would have some effect; especially as she charged him to impress upon her, that even now confession should bring pardon, and concealment of all from Edward. Herbert gladly undertook the mission, and so feelingly, so earnestly discharged it, that poor Ellen felt more heart-broken than she had done yet, and almost incapable of retaining her firmness. But she did; for danger to Edward seemed more imminent now that he was coming home, to the very vicinity of his dreaded uncle, than when he was at a distance. She could only feel thankful—if concealment were indeed so absolutely necessary as he had declared it to be—that Mr. Hamilton was still from home, and might continue to be so during Edward's visit. It was difficult to repress the sickening shudder, when Herbert chanced to mention that Harding was her brother's companion in his voyage home, and difficult, not to express more disappointment than the occasion warranted, that Edward had not answered her last letter. He must have received it, Herbert said, for Sir Edward acknowledged his father's, in which hers to Edward had been inclosed. He left her after a very

long interview, deeply grieved at the failure of all his persuasions, all his remonstrances, but compelled, he could not satisfactorily explain why, either to himself or his family, to pity far more than to blame. Percy declared, as did Caroline and Miss Harcourt, that it must be only his own too kind and gentle disposition, which never could blame anybody or anything. Mrs. Hamilton was bitterly disappointed; Mr. Howard insisted that such obduracy demanded nothing but the sternest treatment, and he only wished Mr. Hamilton's letter could arrive at once. He saw Ellen again himself twice in the five weeks, which elapsed between the discovery of her sin and the arrival of Mr. Hamilton's answer; but if kindness had so failed, it was comparatively easy to resist his well-intentioned, but in this case utterly mistaken sternness. He was in general so kind, even in his judgments, that Mrs. Hamilton thought he must have some reason to believe Ellen so thoroughly hardened, and from his report of her, was enabled to impart her husband's sentence with more firmness, than had she listened to her own kind still loving heart.

It was as she and Mr. Howard had both expected. Ellen was no longer to remain at Oakwood, but to be placed under the care of a maiden lady, living in Yorkshire, a relation of Mr. Hamilton, and one who had occasionally visited Oakwood, and was therefore well known to Mrs. Hamilton, and to Ellis too, and regarded with such dislike by the latter, as to make her actually venture to entreat her mistress not to send Miss Ellen to her; she was sure it would break her heart. Now Miss Seldon was one of the worthiest women that ever

breathed—honest, straightforward, truth-speaking literally to a fault, but as hard as she was true. Whether she ever had any feelings or not, Mrs. Hamilton, with all her penetration, never could discover; but the good she did was immense in practical benevolence, though the quick sympathy, the kindly word, the indulgent thought seemed utterly unknown. She had no pity for faults or failings, always declaring forbearance and love were all folly; “if a branch were in the slightest degree decayed, cut it off; if the blight extend to the root, destroy it,” she was fond of saying. As for youthful follies or errors, she had no patience with them, for never having been, or rather felt young herself, she could not understand the age in others. Ellis had not discrimination enough to discern the good which lay under this very disagreeable exterior: Mrs. Hamilton had; and suffering as she knew a residence with her must be to Ellen, if indeed she were really the character she had seemed in childhood—though the last few months had so contradicted it—she felt her husband had decided wisely, spite of the misery which still even the very thought of sending her orphan niece so completely from her, was to herself. Mr. Hamilton’s letter read harshly, but his wife knew his high, almost stern principles; he had not seen Ellen’s evident anguish; he could only judge from the relation which had been sent him, and all which that told was indeed against her. Of course he said, if she had confessed, and her confession in any degree pleaded for her, his wife would use her own judgment as to the period of her banishment; but he could not imagine any cause for her conduct

sufficiently excusing, as to demand the avoidance of his sentence altogether.

Miss Seldon's last visit to Oakwood was sufficiently well remembered by the young Hamiltons, (though it was before their cousins had arrived from India,) for them all,—even Percy and Caroline, the most indignant against Ellen,—to think of their father's sentence with the deepest regret, and with almost dread for its effect on Ellen.

“If she did but know her, she must speak,” was Emmeline's exclamation. “I did not feel quite sure that I was my own happy self, all the time she was with us.”

“The atmosphere was frozen twenty degrees below zero in all the rooms she frequented, though it was otherwise a hot summer,” rejoined Percy; “and in Yorkshire—”

“Pray do not joke, dear Percy; I cannot bear to think of Ellen going away from us at all, much less to such a guardian, though I know she is very good,” answered Herbert.

“Now, my good fellow, do not attempt to say a word for Nancy Seldon; she was the only person in the world I ever heard you acknowledge you disliked, so what must she be? Worthy! no doubt, or my father would not have trusted Ellen to her, but for anything else—.”

“Poor Ellen! she little knows to what her obstinacy is condemning her,” rejoined Caroline; “I wish she did, and then she might spare herself and Mamma, too,

though I fear even confession would not help her much now.'"

Mrs. Hamilton might and did think with them all, but she could not swerve from her duty. She wrote at once to Miss Seldon, not entering into particulars, but merely asking if she would consent to take charge of a young relative, whose conduct demanded more rigid watchfulness and care, and an entire cessation of indulgence, than could be the case in the family circle at Oakwood. She and her husband had such perfect confidence in her, she said, that if she could oblige them by undertaking the duty, they knew, without any assurance on her part, that she would discharge it faithfully. The yearly sum they offered was large, because they wished their young relative to have all the comforts and appurtenances of a gentlewoman, and the advantages of the best education, the city near which she resided, could afford. Mrs. Hamilton had no doubt of the affirmative nature of the reply, for Miss Seldon owed the recovery of her fortune and position entirely to the exertions of Mr. Hamilton, and she had told him, once for all, that if she could but serve or oblige him in any way, great or small, it would make her far happier than she had ever been, or was likely to be in her solitary life. The letter written and despatched, Mrs. Hamilton summoned Ellen once more to her presence.

The scene was again the library, where she had been writing, and the time nearing the short twilight of October. It was three weeks, rather more, since Sir Edward Manly's letter had been received, and Edward was, therefore, almost daily expected. The feelings

with which his unhappy sister looked to his return it would be a vain attempt to define. At times the intense longing to see him again, caused a wild almost sick feeling of pleasure, that she might perhaps so soon do so ; then came all that had passed, and she pictured his anger, his loathing—true, it had been for him, but he had not thought of such a deed. He would, he must hate and spurn her, too, and the idea of meeting him became absolute agony. Then—and she shuddered in dread—would he think that he must acknowledge it was for him she had thus acted ? and, if so, had she not betrayed instead of saving him ? Incident after incident in their childhood rose before her, to give her hope that he would be silent now, as then, and not betray himself ; but these contending terrors, united with the constant though silent suffering of her banishment from all she loved, the utter hopelessness as to the end of this trial, had not been without their effect on the outward frame. Ellis did not see it, from so constantly watching her, and from Ellen never refusing to take the exercise she desired her, and not making a single complaint as to the pain it was sometimes to walk, and always to swallow her meals ; but as she stood opposite to her aunt, in the full light of the oriel window—her approach had been so noiseless, Mrs. Hamilton, who was bending over some papers, did not see her, till she chanced to look up—the attenuation of form and feature was so very visible, that her aunt could not prevent herself from starting painfully, and the words with which she had intended to address her froze on her lips. It was with the utmost difficulty she refrained from folding her

to her heart, and trying, by every means affection could devise, to soothe or remove that anguish, whatever its nature, far too deep and constant for one so very young; but how dared she do this, when by this determined silence Ellen so defied her authority, and seemed so resolved that neither severity nor kindness, nor her own sufferings should humble her spirit, though they had even affected her frame.

Conquering with a powerful effort the pleadings of affection, Mrs. Hamilton calmly entered on the subject for which she had summoned her, reading to her a greater part of her uncle's letter, hoping that its severity would spare her the pain of any additional remarks. Every word seemed to burn itself on Ellen's brain. What she had hoped she knew not, for she thought she had never hoped at all, but the words, "No cause can be excusing enough to prevent the entire setting aside this sentence," seemed by its agony to tell her that the thought *had* entered her mind, if the real cause were by any chance discovered would she be forgiven, and in time restored to confidence and love? And now it was over, even that hope was gone.

Mrs. Hamilton paused for a reply or an observation, but none came, and she continued impressively—"I can scarcely hope, Ellen, that as even the idea of sparing your only brother shame and misery, on his return home, expecting nothing but joy, after nearly three years' separation and exposure to danger, has had no effect in softening you, that your uncle's sentence will. Once I should have believed that only the thought of leaving me and going to the care of a stranger

would have urged you to speak directly. I can believe this no longer; but as I wish you to be with Edward, at least part of his stay with us, I shall postpone your leaving us, one month from to-day. If, indeed, Edward's influence be such that, for his sake, you will make me a full confession and answer clearly and distinctly every question I put to you, your residence with Miss Seldon shall be limited to three, six, ten, or twelve months, according to the nature of the motive of this incomprehensible and, apparently, most sinful conduct. If you leave us still obdurate, years will, in all probability, pass before we can feel sufficiently confident in the restored integrity and openness of your character as to permit your return to us. The pain you are inflicting upon me it is useless to dwell upon. As the child of my only and most dearly loved sister, I have loved you, hoped for you, with little less intensity of affection than that I have borne towards my own; for I felt that, with the sole exception of your brother, I was the only being you had on earth united to you, by ties of blood. How this conduct repays my love and care you must answer to yourself; I can only be sensible of bitter disappointment."

Again she stopped, evidently expecting a reply, but Ellen still remained silent. The short twilight of autumn had set in so suddenly, that Mrs. Hamilton was not aware her niece's cheek had become still paler, and that her white lips quivered repeatedly, as if she several times tried to speak but could not. After a silence of some minutes, she said—

“If you are determined not to speak, Ellen, you may retire; I have told you all I wished to say, except that till you leave us, though you will still occupy your present rooms, and be still under Ellis’s care, you are at liberty to employ yourself, and go about the house and grounds as usual.”

Ellen turned to go, still in that unbroken silence; she had reached the low step dividing the upper from the lower part of the room, and whether she did not see it, or from some other cause, the room suddenly reeled before her, and she fell heavily forwards. To spring towards her, raise her tenderly, bear her to the nearest couch, though she so trembled herself at finding Ellen quite insensible, as to render the task unusually difficult, and to ring hastily for Ellis, was the work of a minute, but it was many minutes before their united efforts could bring back consciousness.

“I knew it would break her heart, poor lamb!” was Ellis’s exclamation, in a tone of most unusual excitement; “thank God, thank God! Master Edward’s coming home, and that she is not to go till he does.”

“Have you so much confidence in his influence?” asked her mistress, as, unable to resist the impulse, she bent down and repeatedly kissed the cold brow and cheek, to which she was so earnestly striving to restore warmth, “God in mercy grant you may be right!”

“Right? Dear my lady!” (whenever Ellis was strongly moved, she always so addressed her mistress;) “I would stake your confidence in me, which is all my

life's worth, if Master Edward is not at the bottom of it all, and that this poor child is sacrificing herself for some fancied danger to him! I saw enough of that work when they were young children, and I have noticed enough since she has been under my care."

"Edward!" repeated Mrs. Hamilton, so bewildered, as to stop for the moment chafing Ellen's cold hand, "Edward! bearing the high character he does; what can he have to do with it?"

"I don't know, my lady, but I am sure he has. Young men, ay, some of the finest and bravest amongst us, get into difficulties sometimes, and it don't touch their characters as their officers see them, and Master Edward was always so terrified at the mere thought of my Master knowing any of his faults; but—hush! we must not let her know we suspect anything, poor lamb; it will make her still more miserable. You are better now, dear Miss Ellen, are you not?" she added, soothingly, as Ellen feebly raised her hand to her forehead, and then slowly unclosed her eyes, and beheld her aunt leaning over her, with that same expression of anxious affection, which her illness had so often caused in her childhood. Sense, or rather memory had not quite returned, and her first words were, with a faint but happy smile—

"I am better, dear Aunt; much better, I dare say I shall soon be well." But it was only a momentary forgetfulness; swift as thought came the whole of what had so lately passed,—her uncle's letter, her aunt's words, and murmuring, in a tone how painfully changed!

"I forgot,—forgive me," she buried her face in the pillow.

"Ellen, my dear Ellen! why will you persist in making yourself and me so very miserable, when a few words might make us happier?" exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton, almost imploringly, as she bent over her.

"Do not urge her now, dear my lady, she is not well enough; give her till Master Edward comes; I am sure she will not resist him," answered Ellis, very respectfully, though meaningly, as her look drew her mistress's attention to the shudder which convulsed Ellen's slight frame, at the mention of her brother.

Pained and bewildered more than ever, Mrs. Hamilton, after waiting till the faintness seemed quite gone, and thinking that if the restraint of her presence were removed, Ellen might be relieved by tears, left her, desiring Ellis to let her know in a short time how she was. The moment the door closed, Ellen threw her arms round Ellis's neck, exclaiming passionately—

"Take me away—take me away, dear Ellis; I cannot bear this room—it seems all full of misery! and I loved it so once, and I shall love it again when I am miles and miles away, and cannot see it—nor any one belonging to it. Oh, Ellis, Ellis! I knew you were too kind. I was too glad and contented to be with you; it was not punishment enough for my sin—and I must go away—and I shall never, never see my aunt again—I know I shall not. Oh! if I might but die first! but I am too wicked for that; it is only the good that die."

And almost for the first time since her sin had been discovered, she gave way to a long and violent fit of weeping, which, though terrible while it lasted, as the anguish of the young always is, greatly relieved her, and enabled her after that day not to revert in words (the thought never left her till a still more fearful anxiety deadened it) to her uncle's sentence again.

Mrs. Hamilton sat for a very long time alone after she had left Ellen. Ellis's words returned to her again and again so pertinaciously, that she could not break from them. Edward! the cause of it all—could it be possible?—could it be, that he had plunged himself into difficulties, and, afraid to appeal to his uncle or her, had so worked on Ellen as not only to make her send relief, but actually so to keep his secret, as to endure everything rather than betray it? Circumstance after circumstance, thought after thought, so congregated upon her, so seemed to burst into being and flash light one from the other, that her mind ached beneath their pressure. Ellen's unhappiness the day his last letter had been received, her sudden illness—had it taken place before or after Robert had lost the money? She could not satisfy herself, for her husband's sudden summons to Feroe, hasty preparations, and departure, had rendered all that month confused and unsatisfactory in its recollections. So intense was the relief of the idea, that Mrs. Hamilton feared to encourage it, lest it should prove a mere fancy, and urge softer feelings towards her niece than ought to be. Even the supposition made her heart yearn towards her with such a feeling

of love, almost of veneration, for the determined self-devotion, so essentially woman's characteristic, that she resolutely checked its ascendancy. All her previous fancies, that Ellen was no ordinary child, that early suffering and neglect had, while they produced some childish faults, matured and deepened the capabilities of endurance and control, from the consciousness (or rather existence, for it was not the consciousness to the child herself) of strong feeling, returned to her as if determined to confirm Ellis's supposition. The disappearance of her allowance; her assertion, that she was seeking Mrs. Langford's cottage, by that shorter but forbidden path, to try and get her to dispose of her trinkets, when the wind blew the notes to her hand—all now seemed connected one with the other, and confirmed. She could well understand, how in a moment of almost madness they might have been used without thought, and the after-effect, upon so delicate a mind and conscience. Then in contradiction to all this (a mere hypothesis raised on nothing firmer than Ellis's supposition) came the constantly favorable accounts of Edward; his captain's pride and confidence in him; the seeming impossibility that he could get into such difficulties, and what were they? The name of Harding rushed on her mind, she knew not why or how—but it made her tremble, by its probable explanation of the whole. A coarse or even less refined mind, would have either appealed at once to Ellen, as to the truth of this suspicion, or thought herself justified in looking over all Edward's letters to his sister, as thus to discover

the truth ; but in Mrs. Hamilton's pure mind the idea never even entered, though all her niece's papers and letters were in her actual possession. She could only feel to her heart's core with Ellis, "Thank God, Master Edward's coming home!" and pray earnestly that he might be with them, as they hoped and anticipated in a few, a very few days.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LIGHT GLIMMERS.

THE earnest wishes and prayers of Mrs. Hamilton and her faithful Ellis were disappointed. The latter part of the month of September had been exceedingly stormy, and though there was a lull from about the 3d to the 9th of October, the equinoctial gales then set in with the utmost fury; continuing day after day, night after night, till the ear seemed almost to tire of the sound, and the mind, anxious for friends at sea, despair of their cessation. During the few calm days, the young party at Oakwood had scarcely been absent from the windows, or from that part of the park leading to the Plymouth road, above an hour at a time. Percy and Herbert rode over to Plymouth, but were told the frigate could not be in for a full week. The late storms must have detained her, though she was a fast-sailing craft. It was a great disappointment to them, for on the 10th of October college term began, and they were compelled to return to Oxford. The cause of their mother's intense desire for Edward's return, indeed, they did not know; but they were most impatient to see him, and they hoped, they did not exactly know what, with regard to his influence with Ellen. However, the day of their

departure came, and still he had not arrived, and the storms had recommenced. Percy had gone to say good-bye to Ellis, with whom Ellen chanced at that moment to be. Full of spirits and jokes, he determinately looked away from his cousin, took both Ellis's hands, and shook them with his usual heartiness.

"Good-bye, dear Ellis. I wonder if I shall ever feel myself a man when talking to you. How many tricks I have played you in this room, and you were always so good-natured, even when one of my seat-crackers set your best gown on fire and quite spoiled it, do you remember it? I do think you were nearly angry then, and quite enough to make you, and Papa made me save up my money to buy you a new dress. I did not play such a practical joke in a hurry again."

Ellis laughed and perfectly remembered it, and with another hearty good-bye he turned away.

"You have forgotten your cousin, Mr. Percy," she said, disregarding Ellen's imploring look.

"When she remembers her duty to my mother, I will remember that she is my cousin," was his hasty answer, and he hurried from the room as Herbert entered. His good-bye to Ellis was quite as warm as Percy's, and then turning to Ellen, he put his arm round her, kissed her cheek, and said, with impressive earnestness—

"God bless you, dear Ellen! I hope you will be happier when we meet again, and that it will not be so long before we do, as we fancy now;" and, affected almost to tears at the grateful, humble look she raised to his, he left her.

Overcome as much by the harshness of the generous warm-hearted Percy, whom she so dearly loved, as by the gentle kindness of Herbert, Ellen remained for several minutes with her arms on the table, her face hid upon them. She thought she was quite alone, for Ellis had gone about some of her business, when she was startled by Percy's voice.

"I am a brute, Ellen, nothing less ; forgive me, and say good-bye. I can't understand it at all, but angry as I am with you, your pale face haunts me like a spectre, so we must part friends ;" and as she looked hastily up, he kissed her warmly twice, and ran away without another word.

Days passed heavily, the gales seeming to increase in violence, and causing Mrs. Hamilton more terrible anxiety and vague dread than she allowed to be visible. The damage amongst the shipping was fearful, and the very supposed vicinity of the frigate to the Channel increased the danger. The papers every morning presented long lists of ships wrecked, or fatally dismantled, loss of crews or part of them, mails and cargoes due but missing : and the vivid recollection of the supposed fate of her own brother, the wretchedness of the suspense, before the fate of his vessel was ascertained, returned to heighten the fears that would gain ascendancy for her nephew ; and for the effect of this terrible suspense on Ellen, more especially,—if indeed she had endured all these weeks, nay, months of misery for him.

At first Ellen seemed unconscious that there was anything remarkable in the delay, the thought of her

own departure being uppermost ; but when the thought did press upon her, how it came she knew not—that of the given month the weeks were passing, and Edward had not arrived, and that there must be some reason for the long delay—storm, shipwreck, death, all flashed upon her at once, and almost maddened her. The quiet calm of endurance gave way. She could not sleep at night from the tremendous winds ; not even when Ellis had a bed put up in her room, and remained with her all night herself ; she never complained indeed, but hour after hour she would pace her room and the passage leading to Ellis's, till compelled to cease from exhaustion, she would try steadily to employ herself with some difficult study, and succeed, perhaps, for half an hour, but then remain powerless, or recommence her restless walk. Mrs. Hamilton made several attempts without any apparent interference on her part, to get her to sit occasionally with her and Miss Harcourt, and her cousins, but she seemed to shrink from them all. Emmeline indeed, when once aware of the terrible trial she was enduring, would sit with her, drawing or working as if nothing had occurred to estrange them, and try to cheer her by talking on many topics of interest. Caroline would speak to her kindly whenever she saw her. Miss Harcourt alone retained her indignation, for no suspicion of the real cause of her silence ever entered her mind.

Poor Ellen felt that she dared not indulge in the comfort this change in her aunt's and cousins' manner produced. She wanted to wean herself quite from them, that the pang of separation might be less severe,

but she only seemed to succeed in loving them more. One thought, indeed, at length took such entire possession of her mind, as to deaden every other ;—it was the horrible idea that as she had sinned to save Edward, perhaps from merited disgrace, he would be taken from her ; she never breathed it, but it haunted her night and day. Mr. Maitland saw her continually, but he plainly told Mrs. Hamilton, while the cause of anxiety and mental suffering lasted he could do her no good. It was a constant alternation of fearful excitement and complete depression, exhausting the whole system. Repose and kindness—alas ! the latter might be given, but the former, in the present position of affairs, how could it be ensured ?

The month of grace was waning ; only two days remained, and Edward had not arrived, and how could Mrs. Hamilton obey her husband—whose every letter reiterated his hope that she had not been prevailed on to alter his sentence, if Ellen still remained silent—and send her niece from her ? She came at length to the determination, that if another week passed and still there were no tidings, not to let this fearful self-sacrifice, if it really were such, last any longer, but gently, cautiously, tenderly as she could, prevail on Ellen to confide all to her, and promise if Edward really had been erring and in difficulties, all should be forgiven for her sake, and even his uncle's anger averted. Once her determination taken, she felt better enabled to endure an anxiety which was injuring her almost as much as Ellen ; and she turned to Ellis's room, which she had lately very often frequented, for she scarcely

felt comfortable when Ellen was out of her sight, though she had full confidence in Ellis's care.

Ellen was asleep on a sofa, looking so wan, so haggard—so altered from the Ellen of five short months back, that Mrs. Hamilton sat down by her side, pondering whether she was doing right to wait even another week, before she should try to bring relief by avowing her suspicions—but would it bring relief? and after all, was it for Edward? or, had she been allowing affection and imagination to mislead and soften, when sternness might still be needed?

Ellen woke with a start as from some fearful dream, and gazed at Mrs. Hamilton for a full minute, as if she did not know her.

“My dear Ellen, what is it? You have been sleeping uncomfortably—surely you know me?”

“I thought I was at—at—Seldon Grange—are you sure I am not? Dear Aunt Emmeline, do tell me I am at Oakwood, I know I am to go, and very soon; but I am not there now, am I?” and she put one hand to her forehead, and gazed hurriedly and fearfully round her, while, with the other, she held tightly Mrs. Hamilton's dress. There was something alarming both in her look and tone.

“No, love, you are with me still at Oakwood, and you will not go from me till you have been with Edward some little time. You cannot think I would send you away now, Ellen?”

The soothing tone, her brother's name, seemed to disperse the cloud, and, bursting into tears, she exclaimed—

“He will never come—I know he will never come—my sin has killed him.”

“Your sin, Ellen, what can that have to do with Edward?”

“Because,” the words “it was for him” were actually on her lips; but they were checked, and, in increasing excitement, she continued—“Nothing, nothing, indeed, with him—what could it have? but if he knows it—oh, it will so grieve him; perhaps it would be better I should go before he comes—and then, then, he need not know it; if, indeed, he ever comes.”

“I do not think you quite know what you are saying, my dear Ellen; your uncomfortable dream has unsettled you. Try and keep quiet for an hour, and you will be better. Remember, suffering as this dreadful suspense is, your brother is still in a Father’s gracious keeping; and that He will listen to your prayers for his safety, and if it be His good pleasure, still restore him to you.”

“My prayers!” answered Ellen, fearfully. “Mr. Howard said, there was a barrier between Him and me, while I would not confess; I had refused His mercy.”

“Can you confess before God, Ellen? Can you lay your whole heart open before Him, and ask Him in his infinite mercy, and for your Saviour’s sake, to forgive you?”

“I could, and did do so,” answered Ellen, returning Mrs. Hamilton’s earnestly inquiring look, by raising her large expressive eyes, steadily and fearlessly, to her face; “but Mr. Howard told me it was mockery and sin to suppose God would hear me or forgive me while I refused to obey Him, by being silent and obdurate to

you. That if I wished His forgiveness, I must prove it by telling the whole to you, whom His commandments desired me to obey, and — and — as I dared not do that—I have been afraid to pray.” And the shudder with which she laid her head again upon the pillow, betrayed the misery of the fear.

“And is it impossible, quite impossible, that you can confide the source of your grief and difficulty to me, Ellen? Will you not do so—even if I promise forgiveness, not merely to you but to *all* who may have erred? Answer me, my sweet child; your silence is fearfully injuring your mind and body. Why do you fancy you dare not tell me?”

“Because, because I have promised!” answered Ellen, in a fearful tone of returning excitement, and, sitting upright, she clasped her hands convulsively together, while her cheek burned with painful brilliancy. “Aunt Emmeline—oh, do not, pray do not speak to me in that kind tone! be harsh and cold again, I can bear it better. If you did but know how my heart and brain ache—how they long to tell you and so rest—but I cannot—I dare not—I have promised.”

“And you may not tell me whom you have promised?” replied Mrs. Hamilton, every former thought rendered apparently null and vain by these words, and painfully disappointing her; but the answer terrified her.

“Mamma—I promised her, and she stands by me so pale, so grieved, whenever I think of telling you,” answered Ellen, clinging to Mrs. Hamilton, but looking with a strained gaze of terror on vacancy. “I thought I must have told you, when you said I was to go

—to go to Seldon Grange—but she stood by me and laid her hand on my head, and it was so cold, so heavy, I don't remember anything more, till I found you and Ellis leaning over me ; but I ought not to tell you even this. I know I ought not—for look—look Aunt Emmeline !—don't you see Mamma—there—quite close to me ; oh, tell her to forgive me—I will keep my promise,” and shuddering convulsively, she hid her face in her aunt's dress.

Mrs. Hamilton was dreadfully alarmed. Whatever the foundation, and she had no doubt that there was some, and that it really had to do with Edward and his poor mother's mistaken partiality, Ellen's imagination was evidently disordered. To attempt obtaining the truth, while she was in this fearful state of excitement, was as impossible as cruel, and she tried only to soothe her to composure ; speaking of her mother, as happy and in Heaven, and that Ellen had thought of her so much, as was quite natural in her sorrow, that she fancied she saw her.

“It is not reality, love ; if she could see and speak to you, I am sure it would be to tell you to confide all your sorrow to me, if it would make you happier.”

“Oh, no, no—I should be very wicked if it made me happier ; I ought not even to wish to tell you. But Mr. Myrvin told me, even when Mamma went to Heaven, she would still see me, and know if I kept my promise, and tried to win her love, by doing what I know she wished, even after she was dead ; and it was almost a pleasure to do so till now, even if it gave me pain and made me unhappy ; but now, now Aunt Emmeline, I know you

must hate me ; you never, never can love me again—and that—that is so hard to bear.”

“Have you forgotten, my dear Ellen, the blessed assurance, there is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine who have not sinned ? and if our Father in Heaven can so feel, so act, are His creatures to do less ? Do you think, because you have given me pain, and trouble, and disappointment, and compelled me to use such extreme severity, and cause you so much suffering, that it will be quite impossible for me to love you again, if I see you do all you can to win back that love ?”

Ellen made no answer ; but the alarming excitement had so far subsided, as to raise the hope that quietness would subdue it altogether. Mrs. Hamilton remained with her, till she seemed quite calm, and would not have left her then, but she had promised Caroline to drive with her into T— that afternoon to make some purchases ; Emmeline and Miss Harcourt were spending the day at Greville Manor, and her daughter depending on her, she did not like to disappoint her. But the difficulty to think of other things, and cheerfully converse on comparatively indifferent topics, was greater than she had ever found it. That Ellis’s surmise was correct, she had no longer the smallest doubt. Ellen was sacrificing herself, not merely for the love she bore her brother, but from some real or imaginary promise to her poor mother. What its exact nature was, she could not indeed satisfy herself, but that it had something to do with concealing Edward’s faults seemed to flash upon her, she hardly knew how. Ellis’s words

“that she had seen enough of that work when they were children,” returned to her, and various incongruities in Ellen’s character and conduct, which she had been unable to reconcile at the time, all seemed connected with it. But to arrive at the truth was much more difficult than ever; still how could she send Ellen away? and yet, if still silent, would mere surmise satisfy her husband? There was but one hope, one ray of light—Edward’s own honour, if indeed he were permitted to return; and even while driving and talking with Caroline, her heart was one fervent prayer that this might be, and the fearful struggle of her devoted Ellen cease.

Her aunt’s gentle and unexpected kindness had had such a beneficial effect on Ellen, that, after her early dinner, about three o’clock, she told Ellis she would go in the schoolroom, and try and read there for an hour; she knew all the family were out, and therefore would be quite undisturbed. Ellis willingly acquiesced, rejoicing that she should seek any change herself, and advised her, as it was such a mild soft afternoon after the late storms, to take a turn on the terrace, on which a glass-door from the schoolroom opened; it would do her good. Ellen meant to take her advice, but as she looked out from the window over a well-remembered landscape, so many painful thoughts and recollections crowded on her, that she lost all inclination to move. She had not stood there for many weeks, and it seemed to her that the view had never looked so very lovely. The trees all had the last glories of autumn—for it was early in November—the grass was of that beautiful

humid emerald which always follows heavy rain, and though the summer-flowers had all gone, the sheltered beds of the garden, lying beneath the terrace, presented many very beautiful still. The end of the terrace, a flight of stone steps, overlooked the avenue, leading from the principal lodge to the main entrance, and where Ellen stood, she could distinguish a few yards of the path where it issued from some distant trees. She gazed at first, conscious only that she was banished from it all, and that, however long her departure might be deferred, she must go at last, for her uncle's mandate could not be disobeyed; but gradually her eye became fixed as in fascination. A single figure was emerging from the trees, and dressed in the uniform of a midshipman—she was sure it was! but it was a figure so tall, so slim, his step so lingering—it could not be Edward, most likely some one of his messmates, come to tell his fate. He was taller even than Percy, but so much slighter, so different to the boy from whom she had parted, that, though her heart bounded and sunk till faintness seemed to overpower her, she could not convince herself it was he. With an almost unconscious effort she ran out, through the glass-door, to the steps of the terrace; she could see him now distinctly, but not his face, for his cap was low over his forehead; but as he approached, he paused, as if doubting whether to go up to the hall-door, or the well-known terrace, by which he had always rushed into the schoolroom, on his daily return from Mr. Howard's; and as he looked hastily up, his cap fell back, and his eyes met Ellen's. A wild but checked scream broke from her lips, and all was an

impenetrable mist till she found herself in her brother's arms, in the room she had quitted, his lips repeatedly pressing her cheek and forehead, and his voice, which sounded so strange—it did not seem like Edward's, it was so much more deep and manly—entreating her to speak to him, and tell him why she looked so ill; but still her heart so throbbed she could not speak. She could only cling close to him and look intently in his face, which was so altered from the happy, laughing boy, that had he not been, from his extreme paleness and attenuation of feature, still more like their mother when she was ill, his sister would scarcely have known him.

“Dearest Ellen, do speak to me; what has been the matter, that you look so pale and sad? Are you not glad to see me?”

“Glad! oh, Edward, you cannot know how glad; I thought you would never, never come, the storms have been so terrible; I have been ill, and your sudden appearance startled me, for I had thought of such dreadful things, and that was the reason I could not speak at first; but I am sure you are as pale as I am, dear, dear Edward; you have been wounded—have you not recovered them yet?”

“My wounds, Ellen? oh, they were slight enough; I wished and tried for them to be severer, to have done for me at once, but they would not, they only bought me praise, praise which maddened me!”

“Sir Edward,” murmured Ellen in a low, fearful voice, “how did he part with you?”

“As he has always treated me, a kind, too kind

father! oh, Ellen, Ellen, if he did but know the deceiving villain that I am!"

"Would he indeed not forgive, Edward, if he so loves you? not if he knew all, the temptation, the——"

"Temptation, Ellen! what excuse ought there to be in temptation? why was I such a fool, such a madman, to allow myself to be lured into error again and again by that villain, after I had discovered his double face, and I had been warned against him, too? why did I so madly disregard Mr. Howard's and my uncle's warning letters, trusting my self-will and folly, instead of their experience? Brave! I am the veriest coward that ever trod the deck, because I could not bear a sneer!"

"And he? are you still within his power?" inquired Ellen, shrinking in terror from the expression of her brother's face.

"No, Ellen, no; God forgive me—I have tried not to rejoice; the death was so terrible, so nearly my own, that I stood appalled, and, for the first time these two years, knelt down to my God for pardon, mercy to repent. The lightning struck him where he stood, struck him beside me, leaving the withering smile of derisive mockery, with which he had that moment been regarding me, still on his lips. Why, and where had he gone? he, who denied God and his holy Word, turned the solemn service into mockery, and made me like himself,—and why was I spared? Oh, Ellen, I have no words to describe the sensation of that moment!" He stopped, and shuddered, then continued, hurriedly, "Changed as I am in appearance, it is nothing to the change within. I did not know its extent till now that

I am here again, and all my happy boyhood comes before me ; aunt Emmeline's gentle lessons of piety and goodness—oh, Ellen, Ellen, what have been their fruits ? For two years I have given myself up to passion, unrestrained by one word, one thought of prayer ; I dared, sinful madman as I was, to make a compact with my own conscience, and vow, that if I received the relief I expected from you, and was free from Harding, I would reform, would pray for the strength to resist temptation, which I had not in myself ; and when, when the man that was despatched by Sir Edward from the shore, with the letters for the crew, sunk beneath the waves, bearing every dispatch along with him, I cursed him, and the Fate, which had ordained his death. Ellen, Ellen ! why was I saved, and Harding killed ?”

“ And you never received my letter, Edward ? Never knew if I had tried to relieve you from Harding's power ?” answered Ellen, becoming so deadly pale, that Edward forced himself to regain composure ; the nature of his information causing such a revulsion of feeling in his sister as to deaden her to the horror of his words. For what had all this suffering been ?

“ I was sure you had, Ellen, for you always did, and I could trust you as I could myself. A sudden squall had upset the boat, and the man was so encumbered by a large great-coat, every pocket filled with letters and papers, that he sunk at once, though every help was offered. I threw myself into the sea to save him, and Lieutenant Morley praised my courage and benevolence—little did he know my motive ! Besides, Sir Edward told me there was an inclosure for me in my uncle's to him,

and regretted he had not kept it to give it me himself—would to Heaven he had ! Till Harding's death I was in his power, and he had so used it, that I had vowed, on our arrival in England, to abscond, hide myself for ever, go I cared not where, nor in what character ! But he is dead, and I am free ; my tale need be told to none, and if I can I will break from this fatal spell, and redeem the past ; but it seems, it seems as if fiends urged me still to the path of evil ! Would that I had but courage to tell all to Mr. Howard, I should be safer then ; but I cannot—cannot—the risk is too great. Carriage wheels !” he added, starting up—“my aunt and Caroline ; oh, how I rejoiced when they told me at the lodge that my uncle was not here !” and in his extreme agitation at the thought of meeting his aunt, he forgot his sister, or he might have been startled at the effect of his words.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STRUGGLE.

MRS. HAMILTON had been told at the lodge of her nephew's arrival, and so powerful was her emotion, that she leant back in the carriage, as it drove rapidly from the lodge to the Hall, without the power of uttering a word. Caroline was surprised, for his return seemed to her only a cause of rejoicing ;—she had no idea of the mingled dread and joy, the trembling, lest Edward had indeed deceived them all, and, if he had not, the redoubled mystery of Ellen's conduct. While he was absent she could think calmly on him as the cause of all, but now that he was returned, her heart seemed to turn sick with apprehension, and she had hardly strength to inquire where he was, and great was her surprise when she found his arrival was still unknown. Caroline's joyful exclamation, as she ran into the schoolroom to put away some of her purchases, drew her there at once, and for the first five minutes the intense thankfulness that he was indeed safe and comparatively well,—that whatever might be the secret change, his affection for her, to judge by the warmth and agitation of his embrace, was unchanged, and she had that to work on,

alone occupied her mind and enabled her to regain her calmness.

“You do, indeed, look as if you wanted English air and home nursing, my dear boy,” she said, after some little time had elapsed, and Edward had seated himself by her, his hand still clasped in hers; “Sir Edward was quite right to invalid you. Emmeline does nothing but talk of your wounds as making you a complete hero; I am unromantic enough to wish that you had brought me home more colour and more flesh, and less glory; but, I suppose from being so pale, you are more like your poor mother than ever;” and she looked at him so earnestly, that Edward’s eyes, spite of all his efforts, sunk beneath hers. He answered gaily, however, and, in reply to Caroline’s numerous queries, entered into an animated description of their voyage home and the causes of their detention, in their being so often compelled to put into port from the fearful storms they had encountered, and time slipped away so fast that the dinner-bell rung before any one was prepared.

That Ellen should look paler than even when she had left her in the morning, and be still more silent, did not astonish Mrs. Hamilton; the agitation of meeting her brother was quite enough to occasion it; and she advised her to remain quiet while they were at dinner, that she might rejoin them afterwards. She looked as if she had been so very lately ill, that Edward was not surprised at her having dined already; but many little things that occurred during the evening—her excessive quietness, the evident restraint between her and Caroline, and he at first fancied, and then was quite cer-

tain, between her and his aunt, startled and perplexed him. She seemed restrained and shy, too, with him, as if in constant terror. Poor child ! her aunt had advised quietness while alone, and her brother's words rung in her ears, till repose seemed farther off than ever. After all she had suffered before, and after the sending that fatal letter, it had never reached him : she had utterly failed in her attempt to save him. If she had, indeed, confided at first in Mrs. Hamilton, measures would have been taken, she was sure, to have secured him the necessary relief, for whenever her uncle had sent him his allowance it was through Sir Edward, not encountering the risk of the loss of a letter. There had been times when, in the midst of her sufferings, Ellen could realize a sort of comfort in the idea that she had saved Edward and kept his secret ; but where was this comfort now ? All she had endured, all she was still to endure, was for nothing, worse than nothing ; for if Edward knew her sin, feeling that it had brought him no good, and given up, as she felt he must be, to unrestrained passion, or he could not have given vent to such fearful sentiments, she actually trembled for its effect upon him and his anger on herself. She had sometimes fancied that, perhaps, his errors were not so great as he believed them, that he would confess them when he found only his kind indulgent aunt at home, and so peace and hope gradually dawn for both him and her. All her wish, her hope now was, that Mrs. Hamilton could be prevailed upon not to tell him what she had done, for whether it made him think he ought to confess himself

its cause or not, its effect on him would be so terrible, that she felt any additional suffering to herself could be better borne.

With these thoughts, no wonder she was silent, utterly unable to subdue them as she wished, and evince natural interest in all that had occurred to Edward; and tell him all that had happened to herself during their long separation. Caroline, however, was so animated; and when Emmeline and Miss Harcourt returned, unable to comprehend what they could possibly be sent for, a full hour earlier than usual, their astonishment and delight at seeing Edward, prevented anything like a pause in conversation, or unnatural restraint. His cousins found so much to tell as well as to listen to, about Percy and Herbert, as well as themselves; and Emmeline made Edward tell her such minute particulars of their engagements with the pirates, and how he was wounded, and what Sir Edward said to him, that Mrs. Hamilton, anxious as she was—for the longer she was with her nephew, the more convinced she was that he could not meet her eye, and that his gaiety was not natural—she could not help being amused in spite of herself.

Engrossed with thought how to arrive at the truth, for which she so ardently longed, she entered the library, when the prayer-bell rung, with her children; quite forgetting, till she had taken the place at the reading-desk, which, in the absence of her husband and sons, she always occupied herself, that she had intended to desire Ellen to resume her usual place by Emmeline, wishing to spare her any additional suffering the first night of Edward's return, and to prevent any

painful feeling on his part. It was an oversight, but it vexed her exceedingly. She looked hastily round, in the hope of being in time, but Ellen was already in her place, though she had evidently shrunk still more into the recess of the lower window, as if longing for its massive curtains to hide her, and her face was buried in her hands. Mrs. Hamilton would have been still more grieved if she had seen, as Ellis did, the beseeching humble look, which as they entered Ellen had fixed upon her, and that her pale lips had quivered with the half-uttered supplication, which she failed in courage fully to pronounce. Edward appeared too wrapt in his own thoughts to notice it then; and as his aunt's gentle but impressive voice fell on his ear, the words, the room, the whole scene so recalled the happy, and comparatively innocent past, that it was with difficulty he could restrain his feelings, till the attitude of kneeling permitted them full vent in tears, actual tears, when he had thought he could never weep again. The contrast of his past and present self, rendered the one more brightly happy, the other more intensely dark than the actual reality. The unchecked faults and passions of his early childhood had been the sole cause of his present errors; but while under the gentle control of his aunt and uncle and Mr. Howard, he had not known these faults, and, therefore, believed they had all come since. He longed intensely to confide all his errors, all his remorse, to Mr. Howard, whom he still so dearly loved; but he knew he had not courage to confess, and yet hated himself for his cowardice.

Only too well accustomed to control, he banished

every trace of tears (from all save the eye rendered even more than usually penetrating from anxiety), as he arose, and became aware, for the first time, that Ellen was not where he was accustomed to see her. He kissed her fondly as she hurriedly approached him, but perceiving she left the room with merely a faint good night to the rest of the family, and no embrace, as usual, from Mrs. Hamilton, he darted forwards, seized his aunt's hand, and exclaimed—

“What is the matter with Ellen, Aunt Emmeline? Why is she so changed, and why is your manner to her so cold and distant? and why did she kneel apart, as if unworthy to join us even in prayers? Tell me, for pity's sake!”

“Not to-night, my dear Edward. It is a long tale and a painful one, and I rely on *you* to help me, that Ellen and myself may be again as we have been. It is as much pain to me as to her that we are not. To-morrow, I promise you, you shall know all. You have had excitement enough for to-day, and after your exhausting voyage must need rest. Do not fancy this an evasion of your request; I have longed for your return to influence Ellen, almost as much as for the happiness of seeing you again.”

Edward was compelled to be satisfied and retire; but though he did feel sufficient physical exhaustion, for the comfort of his room to be unusually luxurious, his sleep was restless and disturbed by frightful dreams, in which, however varied the position, it always seemed that he was in danger, and Ellen sacrificing herself to save him.

On retiring for the night, Mrs. Hamilton discovered a note on her dressing-table. She thought she knew the writing, but from tremulousness it was so nearly illegible, that it was with great difficulty she deciphered the following words :

“I am so conscious I ought not to address you, know so well that I have no right to ask any favour from you, when I have given you so much trouble and pain, that I could not have asked it, if you had not been so very, very kind this morning. Oh! Aunt Emmeline, if indeed you can feel any pity for me, do not, pray, do not tell Edward the real reason of my banishment from Oakwood; tell him I have been very wicked—have refused to evince any real repentance—but do not tell him what I have done. He is ill, unhappy at having to resign his profession even for a few months. Oh! spare him the misery of knowing my sin. I know I deserve nothing but severity from you—I have no right to ask this—but, oh! if you have ever loved me, do not refuse it. If you would but grant it, would but say, before I go, that in time you will forgive me, it would be such comfort to the miserable—ELLEN.”

Mrs. Hamilton’s eyes filled with tears; the word “*your*” had evidently been written originally, but partially erased, and “*the*” substituted in its stead, and she could not read the utter desolation of one so young, which that simple incident betrayed, without increase of pain; yet to grant her request was impossible. It puzzled her—for why should she so persist in the wish

expressed from the beginning that Edward should not know it? unless, indeed,—and her heart bounded with the hope—that she feared it would urge him to confess himself the cause, and her sacrifice be useless. She locked up the note, which she would not read again, fearing its deep humility, its earnest supplication, would turn her from her purpose, and in praying fervently for guidance and fitful sleep her night passed.

For some time after breakfast the following morning, Edward and his aunt were alone together in the library. It was with the utmost difficulty, he suppressed, sufficiently to conceal, the fearful agitation which thrilled through every nerve as he listened to the tale he had demanded. He could not doubt the use to which that money had been applied. His sister's silence alone would have confirmed it; but in that hour of madness,—for what else is passion unrestrained by principle or feeling?—he was only conscious of anger, fierce anger against the unhappy girl who had borne so much for him. He had utterly forgotten the desperate words he had written. He had never received the intended relief. Till within a week, a short week of his return, he had been in Harding's power, and as Ellen's devotion had saved him nothing, what could it weigh against the maddening conviction, that if he had one spark of honour remaining, he *must* confess that he had caused her sin? Instead of saving, she had betrayed him; and he left his aunt to seek Ellen, so evidently disturbed and heated, and the interview itself had been so little satisfactory in softening him, as, she had hoped, to win him to confession at once, for she had purposely spoken

as indulgently of error and difficulty as she could, without betraying her strengthened suspicions, that if she had known how to do so, she would have forbidden his seeing Ellen till he was more calm.

Unhappily, too, it was that part of the day when Ellis was always most engaged, and she was not even in her own room, so that there was no check on Edward's violence. The control he had exercised while with his aunt but increased passion when it was removed. He poured forth the bitterest reproaches—asked how she could dare hope relief so obtained, would ever have been allowed to reach him?—what had she done but betrayed him? for how could he be such a dishonoured coward as to let her leave Oakwood because she would not speak? and why had she not spoken?—why not betrayed him at once, and not decoyed him home to disgrace and misery? Passion had so maddened him, that he neither knew what he said himself, nor heard her imploring entreaties not to betray himself, and she never would. She clung to his knees as she knelt before him, for she was too powerless to stand, reiterating her supplication in a tone that ought to have recalled him to his better self, but that better self had been too long silenced, and infuriated at her convulsive efforts to detain him, he struck her with sufficient force to make her, more by the agony of a blow from him, than the pain itself, loose her hold at once, and darted from the room.

The hall door was open, and he rushed through it unseen into the park, flying he neither knew where nor cared, but plunging into the wildest parts. How he

arrived at one particular spot he knew not, for it was one which of all others, in that moment of excitement, he would gladly have avoided. It was a small glade in the midst of the wood shelving down to the water's edge, where he and Percy, with the assistance of Robert, had been permitted to erect a miniature boat-house, and where Edward had kept a complete flotilla of tiny vessels. There were the trees, the glade, the boat-house still, ay, and the vessels, in such beautiful repair and keeping, that it brought back the past so vividly, so overpoweringly, from the voiceless proof, which it was, of the affectionate remembrance with which he and his favorite tastes had been regarded, even in his absence, that he could not bear it. He flung himself full length on the greensward, and as thought after thought came back upon him, bringing Ellen before him, self-sacrificing, devoted, always interposing between him and anger, as she had done from the first hour they had been inmates of Oakwood, the thought of that craven blow, those mad reproaches was insupportable; and he sobbed for nearly an hour in that one spot, longing that some chance would but bring Mr. Howard to him, that he might relieve that fearful remorse at once, but utterly unable to seek him of himself.

Edward's disposition, like his mother's, was naturally much too good for the determined pursuit of evil. His errors had actually been much less grave, than from Harding's artful representations he imagined them. He never indulged in passion without its being followed by the most agonized remorse; but from having pertina-

ciously banished the religion which his aunt had so tried to instil, and been taught by Harding to scoff at the only safe guide for youth, as for every age, God's holy word, he had nothing whereon to lean, either as a comfort in his remorse, a hope for amendment, or strength for self-conquest; and terrible indeed might have been the consequences of Harding's fatal influence, if the influence of a home of love had not been still stronger.

Two hours after he had quitted his aunt, he rejoined the family, tranquil, but bearing such evident traces of a mental struggle, at least so Mrs. Hamilton fancied, for no one else noticed it, that she still hoped she did not exactly know what, for she failed in courage to ask the issue of his interview with Ellen. She contented herself with desiring Emmeline to tell her cousin to bring her work or drawing, and join them, and she was so surprised, when Emmeline brought back word that Ellen had said she had much rather not, that she sought her herself.

Ellen's cheeks, in general so pale, were crimson, her eyes in consequence unnaturally brilliant, and she looked altogether so unlike herself, that her aunt was more anxious than ever; nor did her manner when asked why she refused to join them, when Edward had so lately returned, tend to decrease the feeling.

"Emmeline did not say *you* desired it, or I should have known better than to disobey," was her reply, and it was scarcely disrespectful; the tone seemed that of a spirit, crushed and goaded to the utmost, and so utterly unable to contend more, though every nerve was quiver-

ing with pain. Mrs. Hamilton felt bitter pain that Ellen at length did indeed shrink from her; that the disregard of her entreaty concerning her brother appeared so to have wounded, that it had shaken the affection which no other suffering had had power to move.

"I do not *desire* it, Ellen, though I wish it," she replied, mildly; "you are of course at liberty to act as you please, though I should have thought it most natural that, not having been with Edward so long, you should wish to be with him as much as possible now he is at home."

"He will not wish it; he hates me, spurns me, as I knew he would, if he knew my sin! To-day I was to have gone to Seldon Grange; let me go at once! then neither he, nor you, nor any one need be tormented with me any more, and you will all be happy again; let me go, Aunt Emmeline, what should I stay for?"

"If you wish it, Ellen, you shall go next week. I did not imagine that under any circumstances, you could have expressed a desire to leave me, or suppose that it would make me particularly happy to send you away."

"Why should it not? you must hate me, too, or—or you would not have refused the only—only favour I asked you before I went," answered poor Ellen, and the voice, which had been unnaturally clear, was choked for the moment with sobs, which she resolutely forced back. Mrs. Hamilton could scarcely bear it; taking her ice-cold hands in both hers, she said, almost tenderly—

“You have reason to condemn me as harsh and cruel, Ellen ; but time will perhaps explain the motives of my conduct, as I trust and pray it will solve the mystery of yours ; you are not well enough to be left long alone, and Ellis is so much engaged to-day that I do wish you to be with me independent of your brother’s society. If you so much prefer remaining here, I will stay with you, though of course, as Edward has been away from us so long, I should wish to be with him also.”

It was almost the first time Mrs. Hamilton had ever had recourse in the management of her family to anything that was not perfectly straightforward ; and though her present motives would have hallowed much deeper stratagems, her pure mind shrunk from her own words. She wished Ellen to be constantly in Edward’s presence, that he might not be able to evade the impulse of feeling and honour, which the sight of such suffering, she thought must call forth ; she could not bear to enforce this wish as a command, when she had already been, as she felt—if Ellen’s silence were indeed self-devotion, not guilt—so cruelly and so unnecessarily severe. Ellen made neither reply nor resistance, but, taking up her work, accompanied her aunt to the usual morning-room, from which many a burst of happy laughter, and joyous tones were echoing. Caroline and Emmeline were so full of enjoyment at Edward’s return, had so many things to ask and tell, were so perfectly unsuspecting as to his having any concern with his sister’s fault, that if they did once or twice think him less lively and joyous, than when he left home, they attributed it simply, to his not having yet recovered the exhausting

voyage and his wounds. Miss Harcourt, just as unsuspecting, secretly accused Ellen as the cause of his occasional abstraction: her conduct was not likely to pass unfelt by one so upright, so honorable, and if he had been harsh with her, as from Ellen's fearfully shrinking manner, and complete silence when they were together, she fancied, she thought it was so deserved, that she had no pity for her whatever.

The day passed briskly and happily enough, in *seeming* to Mrs. Hamilton and Edward, in reality to all the other members of the party—but one. The great subject of regret was Mr. Howard's absence, he might be back at the Rectory that evening, and Emmeline was sure he would come to see Edward directly. As the hours waned, Ellen became sensible of a sharp and most unusual pain darting through her temples, and gradually extending over her forehead and head, till she could scarcely move her eyes. It had come at first so suddenly, and lasting so short a time, that she could scarcely define what it was, or why she should have felt so suddenly sick and faint; but it increased, till there was no difficulty in tracing it, and before prayer-time, had become such fearful agony, that, if she had not been inured to pain of all kinds, and endowed with extraordinary fortitude and control, she must more than once have betrayed it, by either giving way to faintness, or screaming aloud. She had overheard Mrs. Hamilton desire Robert, to request Mr. Maitland to come to Oakwood as soon as he could, and not hearing the reply that he was not expected home till late at night, ex-

pected him every moment, and thought he would give her something to relieve it, without her complaining.

Edward had asked his cousins for some music, and then, to please Emmeline, had sketched the order of their engagement with the pirates, and no one noticed her, for Mrs. Hamilton's heart was sinking with disappointed hope, as the hours passed, and there was no sign to prove that her surmise was correct, and if it were, that the truth would be obtained.

The prayer-bell rung, and as they rose, Edward's eyes, for the first time since she had joined them, sought and fixed themselves on his sister's face. The paroxysm of pain had for a few minutes subsided, as it had done alternately with violence all day, but it had left her so ghastly pale, that he started in actual terror. It might have been fancy, but he thought there was the trace of his cowardly blow on her pale forehead, raised, and black, and such a feeling of agony and remorse rushed over him, that it was with difficulty he restrained himself from catching her in his arms, and beseeching her forgiveness before them all; but there was no time then, and they proceeded to the library. Every step Ellen took appeared to bring back that fearful pain, till as she sat down, and then knelt in her place, she was sensible of nothing else.

The service was over; and as Mrs. Hamilton rose from the private prayer, with which each individual concluded his devotions, her nephew stood before her, white as marble, but with an expression of fixed resolution, which made her heart bound up with hope, at the

very moment it turned sick and faint with terror. Several of the lower domestics had quitted the library before Edward regained voice, and his first word, or rather action, was to desire those that remained to stay.

“My sister has been disgraced, exposed before you all,” he exclaimed, in a tone of misery and determination, that so startled Miss Harcourt and his cousins, they gazed at him bewildered, “and before you all must be her exculpation. It was less for her sin than her silence, and for the increased guilt which that appeared to conceal, you tell me, she has been so severely treated. Aunt Emmeline, *I* am the cause of her silence—I was the tempter to her sin—I have deceived my commander, deceived my officers, deceived you all—and instead of being what you believe me, am a gambler and a villain. She has saved me again and again from discovery and disgrace, and but for her sin and its consequences would have saved me now. But what has sin ever done but to betray and render wretched? Take Ellen back to your love and care, Aunt Emmeline, and tell my uncle, tell Sir Edward the wretch I am !”

For a full minute after these unexpected, startling words there was silence, for none could speak, not even Emmeline, whose first thought was only joy, that Ellen’s silence was not so guilty as it seemed. Edward had crossed his arms on the reading-desk, and buried his face upon them. The instantaneous change of sentiment which his confession excited towards Ellen in those most prejudiced can scarcely be described ; but Mrs. Hamilton, now that the words she had longed for, prayed for, had been spoken, had scarcely strength to

move. Address Edward she could not, though she felt far more pity towards him than anger; she looked towards Ellen, who still remained kneeling, though Ellis stood close by her, evidently trying to rouse her, and with a step far more hurried, more agitated than her children or household had ever seen, she traversed the long room, and stood beside her niece.

“Ellen,” she said, as she tried to remove the hands which clasped the burning forehead, as if their rooted pressure could alone still that agonizing pain, “my own darling, devoted Ellen! look up, and forgive me all the misery I have caused you. Speak to me, my child! there is nothing to conceal now, all shall be forgiven—Edward’s errors, difficulties, all for your sake, and he will not, I know he will not cause you wretchedness again; look up, my poor child! speak to me, tell me you forgive me.”

Ellen unclasped her hands from her forehead, and looked up in Mrs. Hamilton’s face. Her lips moved as if to speak, but in a moment an expression of agony flitted over her face, a cry broke from her of such fearful physical pain, that it thrilled through the hearts of all who heard, and consciousness deserted her at the same moment, that Mr. Maitland and Mr. Howard, entered the room together.

CHAPTER IX.

ILLNESS AND REMORSE.

It was indeed a fearful night which followed the close of our last chapter. Illness, sufficient to occasion anxiety, both in Herbert and Ellen, had been often an inmate of Oakwood, but it had merely called for care, and all those kindly sympathies, which render indisposition sometimes an actual blessing, both to those who suffer and those who tend. But illness, appearing to be but the ghastly vehicle of death, clothed in such fearful pain, that no control, even of reason and strong will, can check its agonized expression, till at last, reason itself succumbs beneath it, and bears the mind from the tortured frame, this is a trial of no ordinary suffering, even when such illness has been brought about by what may be termed natural causes. But when it follows, nay, springs from mental anguish, when the sad watchers feel that it might have been averted, that it is the consequence of mistaken treatment, and it comes to the young, to whom such sorrow ought to be a thing unknown, was it marvel that Mrs. Hamilton, as she stood by Ellen's bed, watching the alternations of death-like insensibility, with paroxysms of pain, which nothing could relieve (for it was only the commencement of brain

fever), felt as if she had indeed never known grief or anxiety before. She had looked forward to Edward's confession bringing hope and rest to all; that the aching head and strained nerves of her poor Ellen, only needed returning love, and the quietness of assured forgiveness for herself and Edward, for health and happiness gradually to return; and the shock of such sudden and terrible illness, betraying, as it did, an extent of previous mental suffering, which she had not conceived as possible in one so young, almost unnerved her. But hers was not a character to give way; the anguish she experienced might be read in the almost stern quiet of her face, in her gentle but firm resistance to every persuasion to move from Ellen's bed, not only through that dreadful night, but for the week which followed. The idea of death was absolute agony; none but her God knew the struggle, day after day, night after night, which she endured, to compel her rebellious spirit to submission to His will, whatever it might be. She knew earth's dearest, most unalloyed happiness could not compare with that of Heaven, if indeed it should be His pleasure to recall her; but the thought *would not* bring peace. She had no reason to reproach herself, for she had acted only as imperative duty demanded, and it had caused her almost as much misery as Ellen. But yet the thought would not leave her, that her harshness and cruelty had caused all the suffering she beheld. She did not utter those thoughts aloud, she did not dare give words to that deep wretchedness, for she felt her only sustaining strength was in her God. The only one who would have read her heart, and given sympathy, strength,

comfort, without a word from her, her husband, was far away, and she dared not sink ; though there were times when heart and frame felt so utterly exhausted, it seemed as if she must.

Mr. Howard's presence had been an inexpressible relief. "Go to Edward, my dear friend," she had said, as he lingered beside the bed where Ellen had been laid, longing to comfort, but feeling at such a moment it was impossible ; "he wants you more than any one else ; win him to confide in you, soothe, comfort him ; do not let him be out of your sight."

Not understanding her, except that Edward must be naturally grieved at his sister's illness, Mr. Howard sought him, and found him still in the library, almost in the same spot.

"This is a sad welcome for you, Edward," he said, kindly laying his hand on his shoulder, "but do not be too much cast down. Ellen is very young, her constitution Mr. Maitland assures us is good, and she may be spared us yet. I came over on purpose to see you, for late as it was when I returned from Exeter, and found you had arrived, I would not defer it till to-morrow."

"You thought you came to see the pupil you so loved," answered Edward, raising his head, and startling Mr. Howard, both by his tone and countenance. "You do not know that I am the cause of my poor sister's suffering, that if she dies, I am her murderer. Oh, Mr. Howard," he continued, suddenly throwing himself in his arms, and bursting into passionate tears, "why did I ever leave you ? why did I forget your counsels, your goodness, throw your warning letter to the winds ? Hate

me if you will, but listen to me—pity me, save me from myself.”

Startled as he was, Mr. Howard, well acquainted with the human heart, its errors, as well as its better impulses, knew how to answer this passionate appeal, so as to invite its full confidence and soothe at the same time. Edward poured out his whole tale. It is needless to enter upon it here in detail; suffice it, that the artful influence of Harding, by gradually undermining the good impressions of the home he had left, had prepared his pupil for an unlimited indulgence in pleasure, and excitement, at every opportunity which offered. And as the Prince William was cruising off the coast of British America, and constantly touching at one or other of her ports, where Harding, from his seniority and usefulness, and Edward, from his invariable good conduct, were often permitted to go ashore, these opportunities, especially when they were looked for and used by one practised in deceit and wickedness, were often found. It does not require a long period to initiate in gambling. The very compelled restraint, in the intervals of its indulgence, but increased its maddening excitement, and once given up to its blind pursuit, Harding became more than ever necessary to Edward, and of course his power over him increased. But when he tried to make him a sharer and conniver in his own low pleasures, to teach him vice, cautiously as he thought he had worked, he failed; Edward started back appalled, and though unhappily he could not break from him, from that hour he misdoubted and shrunk away. But he had given an advantage to his fell tutor, the extent of which he knew not himself. Harding was

too well versed in art to betray disappointment. He knew when to bring wine to the billiard-table, so to create such a delirium of excitement, that Edward was wholly unconscious of his own actions ; and once or twice, he led him into scenes, and made him sharer of such vicious pleasures, that secured him as his slave ; for when the excitement was over, the agony of remorse, the misery, lest his confiding captain should suspect him other than he seemed, made him cling to Harding's promises of secrecy, as his only refuge, even while he loathed the man himself. It was easy to make such a disposition believe that he had, in some moment of excitement, done something which, if known, would expel him the Navy ; Edward could never recall what, but he believed him, and became desperate. Harding told him it was downright folly to think about it so seriously. It was only known to him, and he would not betray him. But Edward writhed beneath his power ; perpetually he called on him for pecuniary help, and when he had none, told him he must write home for it, or win it at the billiard-table, or he knew the consequences ; and Edward, though again and again he had resolved he would not touch a ball or cue, (and the remorse had been such, that he would no doubt have kept the resolve, had it not been for dread of betrayal,) rather than write home, would madly seek the first opportunity, and play, and win perhaps enough, all but a few pounds, to satisfy his tormentor, and for these he would appeal to his sister, and receive them as we know ; never asking, and so never hearing, the heavy price of individual suffering at which they were obtained.

The seven or eight months which had elapsed before his last fatal appeal, had been occasioned by the ship being out at sea. Sir Edward had mentioned to Mr. Hamilton, that Edward's excellent conduct on board had given him a longer holiday on shore, when they were off New York, to which place he had been despatched on business to the President, than most of his companions. Edward thought himself safe, for Harding had been unusually quiet, but the very day they neared land, he told him he must have some cash, sneered at the trifling sum Edward had by him, told him if he chose to let him try for it fairly, they should have a chance at billiards for it ; but if that failed, he must pump his rich relations for it, for have it he must. Trusting to his luck, for he had often won, even with Harding, he rushed to the table, played, and as might be expected, left off, owing his tormentor fifty pounds. Harding's fiendish triumph, and his declaration that he must trouble him for a cheque to that amount, signed by the great millionaire, Arthur Hamilton, Esq., goaded him to madness. He drank down a large draught of brandy, and deliberately sought another table and another opponent, and won back fifteen : but it was the last day of his stay on shore, as his enslaver knew, and it was the wretchedness, the misery of this heavy debt to the crafty merciless betrayer of his youthful freshness and innocence, who had solemnly sworn if he did not pay it by the next letters from his home, he would inform against him, and he knew the consequences, which had urged that fearful letter to Ellen, from which all her suffering had sprung. Edward was

much too young and ignorant of the world's ways to know that Harding no more dared execute his threat against him, than he could put his own head in the lion's mouth. His remorse was too deep, his loathing of his changed self too unfeigned, to believe that his errors were not of the heinous, fatal nature which Harding taught him to suppose them ; and the anguish of a naturally fine, noble, independent spirit may be imagined. All his poor mother's lessons of his uncle's excessive sternness, and determined pitilessness, towards the faults of those less firm, and worthy than himself returned to him, completely banishing his own experiences of that same uncle's excessive kindness. The one feeling had been insensibly instilled in his boyhood, from as long as he could remember, till the age of twelve ; the other was but the experience of eighteen short months. Oh, if parents would but think and tremble at the vast importance of the first lessons which reach the understanding of the young beings committed to their care ! Let them impress TRUTH, not prejudice, and they are safe. Once fix a false impression, and they know not, and it is well perhaps they do not, the misery that tiny seed may sow.

Mr. Howard listened with such earnest heartfelt sympathy, such deep commiseration, that his young penitent told him every error, every feeling, without the smallest reserve, and in the long conversation which followed, he felt more comforted, more hopeful of himself, than he had done for long, long months. He told with such a burst of remorseful agony, his cruelty to his devoted sister, that Mr. Howard could scarcely bear

it unmoved, for on that subject there seemed indeed no comfort ; and he himself, though he would not add to Edward's misery by confessing it, felt more painfully self-reproached for his severity towards her, than his conduct as a minister had ever excited before.

"Be with me, or rather let me be with you, as much as you can," was Edward's mournful appeal, as their long interview closed ; "I have no dependence on myself—a weak miserable coward ! longing to forsake the path of evil, and having neither power nor energy to do so. I know you will tell me, pray—trust. If I had not prayed, I could not have confessed—but it will not, I know it will not last."

"It will, while enduring this heavy trial of your poor sister's terrible illness, and God's infinite mercy may so strengthen you in the furnace of affliction as to last in returning joy ! Despair, and you must fall ; trust, and you will hope and struggle—despite of pain or occasional relapses. Your faults are great, but not so great as Harding represented them—not so heavy but that you can conquer and redeem them, and be yet all we have believed you, all that you hoped for in yourself."

"And my uncle—" said Edward, hesitatingly.

"Must be told ; but I will answer for him that he will be neither harsh nor unjust, nor even severe. I will write to him myself, and trust to convince him that your repentance, and resolution, are sufficiently sincere, to permit you a second trial, without referring to Sir Edward. You have done nothing to expel you from your profession ; but it depends on yourself to become truly worthy of its noble service."

There was much in the sad tale he had heard to give hope, and Mr. Howard longed to impart its comfort to Mrs. Hamilton ; but he felt she could not listen. While day after day passed, and the poor sufferer for another's errors lay hovering between life and death, reason so utterly suspended, that even when the violent agony of the first seven days and nights had subsided into lethargic stupors, alternating with such quiet submission and gentle words, that, had it not been for their wandering sense, one might have fancied intellect returning ; still reason was absent—and, though none said it aloud, the fear would gain dominion that health might return but not the mind. The first advice had been procured ;—what was distance, even then, to wealth ?—every remedy resorted to. Her luxuriant hair cut close, and ice itself applied to cool that burning throbbing pain ; but all had seemed vain, till its cessation, at the end of seven days, somewhat renewed Mr. Maitland's hope.

Not one tear had Mrs. Hamilton shed, and so excessive had been her fatigue, that Miss Harcourt and her children trembled for her ; conjuring her, for their sakes, for her husband's, to take repose. Mr. Maitland's argument, that when Ellen recovered her senses, (which he assured her now he had little doubt she would eventually,) she would need the soothing comfort of her presence still more than she could then, and her strength must fail before that,—if she so exhausted it,—carried more weight than all the rest ; and her daughters had the inexpressible relief of finding that when, in compliance with their tearful entreaties, she did lie down, she slept, and slept refreshingly, for Nature

was exhausted. There was much of comfort in those days of trial, which Mrs. Hamilton fully realized, when Ellen's convalescence permitted her to recall it, though at the time it seemed unnoticed. That Caroline's strong mind and good heart, should urge her to do everything in her power to save her mother trouble, even to entreat Ellis and Morris to show her, and let her attend to the weekly duties with them, and accomplish them so earnestly and well, that both these faithful domestics were astonished and delighted, was not surprising: for hers was a character to display its better qualities in such emergencies. But that Emmeline should so effectually rouse herself from the overwhelming grief, which had at first assailed her at Ellen's fearful sufferings and great danger, as to be a comfort alike to her mother and Edward, and assist Caroline whenever she could, even trying to be hopeful and cheerful for other's sakes, till she actually became so, *was* so unexpected, from the grief she had indulged in when, she parted from her father, that it did surprise. To be in the room with Ellen had so affected her at first, that she became pale, and so evidently terrified, that Mrs. Hamilton half desired her not to come, especially as she could do no good; and Mrs. Greville and Mary had tried to prevail on her to stay with them, but she would not hear of it.

“ If I can do no good, can neither help Mamma in nursing Ellen, nor as Caroline does, I can, at least, try to comfort poor Edward, and I will not leave him. If I am so weak, as not to be able to endure anxiety and sorrow without showing it, it shall not conquer me. No, no, dear Mary, come and see me as often as you like, but I

annot leave home till Mamma and Ellen and we are all happy again!"

And she did devote herself to Edward, and so successfully—with her gentle sympathy with his grief, her tender feeling towards his faults, her conviction of her father's forgiveness, her unassuming but heart-breathing piety, which without one word unduly introduced of a subject so holy, for she felt herself much too lowly and ignorant to approach it,—yet always led up his thoughts to God, and from one so young, so humble, and, in general, so joyous, had still greater effect in confirming his returning religious hope, than had his teachers been only those who were older and wiser than himself. However miserable he might be before she came, he looked to her society, her eloquence, as comfort and hope; and soon perceiving this, she was encouraged to go on, though quite astonished—for she could not imagine what she had done to deserve such commendation—when Mr. Howard, one day meeting her alone, took both her hands in his, and with even unusual fervour bade God bless her!—for young, lowly, as she was, she not only comforted the erring, but raised and strengthened the penitent's trembling faith and hope.

Poor Edward! harder than all seemed to him his aunt's silence. He knew his sister entirely engrossed her—ill as Ellen was it could not be otherwise; but he passionately longed only for one word from her: that she forgave him the misery she was enduring. Not aware that such was his feeling, conscious herself that her sole feeling towards him was pity, not anger, and looking to herself alone as the cause of her poor child's

sufferings, she did not think for a moment, that he could imagine her never referring to his confession, originated in displeasure.

Ten or twelve days had so passed, when one afternoon, completely exhausted with two nights' watchfulness—for though Nurse Langford and Fanny were in constant attendance on Ellen, she could not rest if she heard that harrowing cry for her, even though her presence brought no comfort,—she went to lie down for a few hours on a couch in her dressing-room. Caroline had taken a book, though with not much inclination to read, to sit by her, and watch that her sleep should not be disturbed. How, in those moments of quiet did she long for her father! feeling intuitively how much heavier was her mother's trial without his loved support. He had been written to by them all since Edward's confession. Mrs. Hamilton had done so in Ellen's room, only to beseech him to write forgivingly, forbearingly, to the unhappy cause of all. She did not dare breathe her feelings, even on paper, to him, convinced that if she did so, control must give way, and she was powerless at once; but her husband knew her so well, that every suppression of individual emotion betrayed more forcibly than the most earnest words, all she was enduring.

Caroline had kept her affectionate vigil nearly two hours, when Edward's voice whispered, "Miss Harcourt wants you, dear Caroline; let me take your place, I will be quite as watchful as yourself; only let me stay here, you do not know the comfort it will be."

To resist his look of pleading wretchedness was im-

possible. She left him, and Edward, drawing a low stool to the foot of the couch, as if not daring to occupy his cousin's seat, which was close by the pillow, gazed on the mild gentle features of his aunt, as in their deep repose they showed still clearer the traces of anxiety and sorrow, and felt more keenly than ever the full amount of misery, which his errors and their fatal concealment had created. "Why is it," he thought, "that man cannot bear the punishment of his faults without causing the innocent, the good, to suffer also?" And his heart seemed to answer, "Because by those very social ties, the strong impulses of love for one another, which would save others from woe, we may be preserved and redeemed from vice again and yet again, when, were man alone the sufferer, vice would be stronger than remorse, and never be redeemed."

Mrs. Hamilton woke with that painful start which long watchfulness always occasions, and missing Caroline, yet feeling as if she were not alone, her eyes speedily fixed themselves in some surprise on the figure of her nephew, who, unable to bear the thoughts the sight of her exhaustion produced, had bent his head upon the couch. Inexpressibly touched, and glad of the opportunity to speak to him alone, she called him to her, and there was something in the tone that encouraged him to fling himself on his knees by her side, and sob like an infant, saying, almost inarticulately—

"Can you, will you, ever forgive me, Aunt Emmeline? Your silence has almost broken my heart, for it seemed to say you never could; and when I look at my

poor Ellen, and see how I have changed this happy home into sorrow and gloom and sin, for it is all my work—mine, whom you have loved, treated, trusted, as a son—I feel you cannot forgive me; I ought to go from you; I have no right to pollute your home.”

“Hush, Edward! do not give utterance or indulgence to any such thoughts. My poor unhappy boy! your errors have brought such fearful chastisement from the hand of God himself, it is not for me to treat you harshly. May His mercy avert yet severer trial! I will not hear your story now; you are too agitated to tell it, and I am not at this moment strong enough to bear it. I am satisfied that you have confided all to Mr. Howard, and will be guided by him. Only tell me how came you first to apply to Ellen? Did the thought never strike you, that in sending relief to you, she might be exposing herself to inconvenience or displeasure? Was there no consideration due to her?”

“I never seemed to think of her, except as glad and willing to help me, at whatever cost to herself,” was his reply. “I feel now the cruel selfishness of the belief—but, oh, Aunt Emmeline, it was fostered in me from my earliest childhood, grew with my growth, increased with my years, received strength and meaning from my poor mother’s utter neglect of her, and too indulgent thought for me. I never thought so till now, now that I know all my poor sister’s meek and gentle worth, and it makes me still more miserable. I never could think her my equal; never could fancy she could have a will or wish apart from mine, and I cannot trace the commencement of the feeling. Oh! if we had been but treated alike!

but taught to so love each other, as to think of each other's happiness above our own, as you taught my cousins !”

“Do you know anything of the promise to which poor Ellen so constantly refers ?” inquired Mrs. Hamilton, after gently soothing his painful agitation.

He did not, but acknowledged that from the time they had become inmates of Oakwood Ellen had constantly saved him from punishment by bearing the penalty of his faults ; recalling numerous incidents, trifling in themselves, but which had always perplexed Mrs. Hamilton, as evincing such strange contradictions in Ellen's childish character, and none more so than the disobedience which we related in our second part, and which Edward's avowal of having himself moved the flower-stand, now so clearly explained. He said, too, that Mr. Howard had thought it necessary, for Ellen's perfect justification, to examine her letters and papers, but that all his appeals to her had been destroyed but one—his last fatal inclosure, the exact contents of which he had so utterly forgotten, written, as they were, in a moment of madness, that he shuddered himself as he read it. He placed the paper in Mrs. Hamilton's hand, conjuring her not to recall her forgiveness when she read it ; but she must see it, it was the only amends he could make his poor Ellen, to exculpate her fully. Was it any wonder it had almost driven her wild ? or that she should have scarcely known the means she adopted to send him the relief, which, as he deserved, had never reached him ?

Mrs. Hamilton read the letter, and as thought after

thought rose to her mind, connecting, defining, explaining Ellen's conduct from her fifteenth birthday, the day she received it, to the discovery of her sin, and her devoted silence afterwards, trifling incidents which she had forgotten returned to add their weight of evidence, and increase almost to agony her self-reproach, for not seeing the whole before, and acting differently. She remembered now Ellen's procrastination in writing to Edward, the illness which followed, and could well understand her dread lest the finding the notes should be traced to that day, and so throw a suspicion on her brother, and her consequent firmness in refusing to state the day she had found them.

That long interview was one of inexpressible comfort to Edward; but though his unfeigned repentance and full confession gave his aunt hope for him, it did but increase her individual trial, as she returned to Ellen's couch and listened to wanderings only too painfully explained by the tale she had heard.

CHAPTER X.

MISTAKEN IMPRESSIONS ERADICATED.

IT was the seventeenth day of Ellen's illness, and for six and thirty hours she had slept profoundly, waking only at very long intervals, just sufficiently to swallow a few drops of port wine, which Mr. Maitland had ordered to be administered if she woke, and sunk to sleep again. It was that deep, still, almost fearful repose, for it is so like death, which we can scarcely satisfy ourselves is life, except by holding a glass at intervals to the lips, to trace if indeed it receive the moisture of the breath. And Nurse Langford, Mrs. Hamilton, and Edward had, through these long hours, watched and scarcely stirred. For they knew that on her waking hung hope or misery, return of intellect, or its confirmed suspension. Mr. Maitland had particularly wished Edward to be with her when she recovered her senses, that his presence might seem as natural as either of her cousins; but he warned him that the least display of agitation on his part, or reference to the past, in her exhausted state, might be fatal to her. It was quite the evening. Widow Langford had lighted the lamp, and sat down by the fire, scarcely able

to breathe freely, from the intensity of her hope that Ellen would recover. And if such were her feelings, what were Edward's and Mrs. Hamilton's? The former was kneeling on the right of the bed, his eyes alternately fixed on his sister, and buried in the coverlid. Mrs. Hamilton was on the opposite side, close to Ellen's pillow, the curtain drawn so far back, that the least change on her patient's countenance was discernible. Hour after hour had so passed, the chimes that told their flight scarcely heard by those anxious watchers. It was about eight o'clock, when a slight movement in Ellen made her aunt's heart so throb, as almost to deprive her of breath; her eyes unclosed, and a smile, such as Mrs. Hamilton had not seen for weeks, nay months, circled her lips.

"Dear Aunt, have I been ill? It seems such a long, long time since I have seen you, and my head feels so strange, so light; and this room, it is my own, I know, but I feel as if it did not belong to me somehow. Do make my head clear, I cannot think at all."

"Do not try to think yet, darling. You have been very, *very* ill, and to endeavour to think might hurt you. Strength will soon return now, I hope, and then your head will be quite clear again," replied Mrs. Hamilton, quietly and caressingly, though she so trembled with the change from sickening dread to certain hope, that she herself scarcely knew how she spoke at all.

"But what made me so ill, Aunt? I feel as if it were some great pain; I cannot remember anything clearly, but yet it seems as if I had been very unhappy,—and

that—that you did not love me any more. Did anything make me ill? Was it really so?”

“That I did not love you, my Ellen? indeed, that was only fancy. You were very unhappy, as we were all, for Edward did not come as soon as we expected him, and the storms were very dreadful, and we feared his ship might have been wrecked, or cast ashore, somewhere very far off, where we could not hear of him, and when you saw him, and knew he was safe, the anxiety and pain you had undergone, made you ill; you know a little thing will do that, dearest.”

“But is he really safe, Aunt Emmeline? Where is he?”

“Close by you, love. He has been as watchful and anxious a nurse as I have been. Poor fellow, you have given him a sad welcome, but you must make up for it by-and-by.”

Ellen looked languidly, yet eagerly round, as her aunt spoke, and her gaze fixed itself on her brother, who was struggling violently to suppress the emotion, which at the sound of her voice, in connected words, nearly overpowered him; and still more so,—when Ellen said, more eagerly than she had yet spoken.—

“Dear Edward! come and kiss me, and do not look so sad. I shall soon get well.”

He bent over her, and kissed her repeatedly, trying in vain to say something, but he felt so choked, he could not; and Ellen held his hand, and looked earnestly, searchingly in his face, as if trying painfully to define the vague thoughts and memories which seemed all connected with him and with pain, but which would

not take a distinct form. Her eye wandered from him for a moment to Nurse Langford, who had come to the foot of the bed, and that seemed another face connected with the blank past, and then it fixed itself again on Edward, and her pale face so worked with the effort of thought, that Mrs. Hamilton became alarmed. She saw too that Edward was growing paler and paler, and trembled for the continuance of his control. Taking Ellen's hand gently from his, and arranging her pillow at the same time, so as to turn her face rather from him, she said, playfully—

“You have looked at Edward long enough, Ellen, to be quite sure he is safe at home. So now I shall be jealous if you give him any more of your attention and neglect me; you must take some nourishment, and try to go to sleep again, for I must not have you try your strength too much.”

“If I could but remember clearly,” answered Ellen, sadly; “it is all so vague—so dark—but I do not think it was only because he did not come, that made me so unhappy.”

“You are not going to be disobedient, dearest,” replied Mrs. Hamilton, firmly, though fondly, as she hastily signed to Edward to leave the room, which he most thankfully did, never stopping till he reached his own, and tried to thank God for His great mercy, but could only sob. “I told you not to think, because to do so might retard return of strength, and indeed you must try and obey me; you know I am very peremptory sometimes.” And the fond kiss with which she enforced the command seemed to satisfy Ellen, whose natural

submissiveness, combined with excessive physical weakness, caused her to obey at once, and not attempt to think any more. She took the required nourishment with returning appetite, and soon afterwards fell quietly and happily to sleep again, her aunt's hand closely clasped in hers.

From that day, all fear of disordered intellect departed, and gradually the extreme exhaustion gave way before Mr. Maitland's judicious treatment. Strength, indeed, returned so slowly and almost imperceptibly, that it was necessary to count improvement by weeks, not days. And when, six weeks after her first seizure, she was thought well enough to be carried to Mrs. Hamilton's dressing-room, and laid on a couch there, it was a source of gratitude and rejoicing to all. But Mr. Maitland and Mrs. Hamilton soon saw, and with intense anxiety, that with the physical strength memory and thought had but fully returned, and that their consequence was a depression so deep, as effectually to retard her perfect recovery. She seemed to shrink from all attention, all kindness, as utterly undeserved, even from her cousins. She would look at Edward for half an hour together, with an expression of suffering, that made the heart actually ache. At times she would receive Mrs. Hamilton's caressing and judicious tenderness as if it were her only comfort, at others, shrink from it, as if she had no right to it.

"This will never do," Mr. Maitland said, about ten days after Ellen's removal into her daily quarters, and finding she was losing ground; "there is something on her mind, which must be removed, even if to do

so, you refer to the past. She remembers it all too clearly I fear, so our not alluding to it does no good. You must be the physician in this case, my dear Mrs. Hamilton, for I am powerless."

But though she quite agreed with him, how to approach such a very painful subject required no little consideration, but, as is very often the case, chance does that on which we have expended so much thought.

One afternoon Ellen lay so still, so pale, on her couch, that Mrs. Hamilton bent over her to listen if she breathed, saying, as she did so, almost unconsciously—

"My poor Ellen, when shall I have the comfort of seeing you well and happy again?"

Ellen hastily unclosed her eyes, for she was not asleep,—it had been only the stupor of painfully-engrossing thought, rendering her insensible to all outward things, but her aunt's voice aroused her, and it seemed an inexpressible relief to feel they were quite alone. Trying to rise, and clasping her hands, she said, in a tone of strong excitement—

"Oh, Aunt Emmeline, how can I be happy—how can I be well—when I think—think—that if it had not been for my sin, and the misery it brought me, Edward might be safe still? no one need have known his errors. I tried to save,—and—and I have only betrayed, and made him wretched. All I suffered was for nothing, worse than nothing!"

"Thank God, you have spoken, my dear child! I felt as if I dared not introduce the subject; but now that you have yourself, I think I shall be able, if indeed you will listen to me patiently, Ellen, to disperse the

painful mists, that are still pressing so heavily on this poor little heart and brain," she said, fondly, though seriously, as she put her arm round Ellen, to support her as she sat up. "I do not tell you it is not a natural feeling, my love, but it is a wrong one. Had your sin, in consideration of its being, as I am now convinced it was, wholly involuntary—for in the fearful state of mind Edward's desperate letter occasioned, you could not have known or thought of anything, but that relief seemed sent to your hand—had it on that account been permitted so far to succeed, as to give him the aid he demanded, and never have been traced to you, it would have confirmed him in the path of guilt and error, and poisoned your happiness for ever. When you recall the agony, almost madness you felt, while burdened with the consciousness of such an act, how could you have borne it, if it had continued through months, perhaps years? You shudder; yet this must have been the case, and Edward would have persisted in error, if your sin had been permitted to succeed. Its detection, and the sufferings thence springing, terrible as they have been to you, my poor child, have saved him; and will, I trust, only bring securer happiness to you."

"Saved him!" repeated Ellen, half starting up, and scarcely hearing the last words—"saved Edward!"

"Yes, dearest, by leading him to a full confession, and giving him not only the inexpressible comfort of such a proceeding, but permitting him to see, that great and disappointing as his errors are, they can be conquered. They are not of the irremediable, guilt-con-

firming nature, that he was taught to suppose them for Harding's own most guilty ends, and so giving him hope and resolution to amend, which a belief that amendment is impossible entirely frustrates. Do not fear for Edward, my own love; he will give you as much pride and comfort as he has anxiety and grief: and you, under God's mercy, will have been the cause. It is a hard lesson to learn, and yet, Ellen, I think one day, when you can look back more calmly on the last few months, you will acknowledge with me, that great as your suffering have been, they were sent in love, both to him and to you."

"If they have saved him—saved him from a continuance in error, and so made him happy!—Oh, Aunt Emmeline, I can think so now, and I will try to bear the rest! but why," she added, growing more excited, "oh, why have you been so good, so kind? Why did you not continue cold and distant? I could bear it better then."

"Bear what, love? What have you more to bear? Tell me all without reserve. Why should I be cold, when you deserve all my love and kindness?"

"Because, because—am I not to go to Seldon Grange, as soon as I am strong enough? Uncle Hamilton said, there could be no excusing cause demanding a complete avoidance of his sentence. I thought it was pain enough when you first told me; but now, now every time I think about it, it seems as if I could not bear it."

"And you are not called upon to bear it, my dear child. Is it possible you could think for a moment

that I could send you away from me, when you have borne so much, and been treated with far too much severity already? Did I not tell you that the term of your banishment depended on the motive of your silence, and do you think there was no excuse in your motive, my Ellen, mistaken as it was? Is self-devotion to be of no more account to me, than it seemed to you? Come, smile, dearest; I promise you, in your uncle's name and my own, you shall never leave me, unless it be your own free will and pleasure a few years hence."

Ellen did try to smile, but she was too weak to bear this complete removal of a double burden without an emotion that seemed more like pain than joy. She laid her head on her aunt's shoulder, and wept without restraint. They were the first tears she had shed since her illness, and Mrs. Hamilton thanked God for them. She did not attempt to check them, but the few words she did speak told such affectionate sympathy, such perfect comprehension of that young heart, that Ellen felt as if a mountain of lead were dissolving from her.

"And now, my Ellen, that I have relieved you of a painful dread, will you ease my mind of a great anxiety?" inquired Mrs. Hamilton, nearly an hour afterwards, when Ellen seemed so relieved and calmed, that she could talk to her without fear. "You look surprised; but it is a subject you alone can explain, and till it is solved, I shall never feel that your happiness is secure. What is this promise, to which in your illness you so constantly referred, and which, I fear, has strengthened you in the system of self-sacrifice for Edward's sake, in addition to your love for him?"

A deep flush rose to Ellen's transparent cheek and brow, as she answered, falteringly—

“Ought I to tell you, dear Aunt? You do not know how often, how very often I have longed to ask you if to keep it, made me do wrong,—whether I ought to break it? and yet it seemed so sacred, and it gave poor Mamma such comfort!”

“When did you make it, love? Its import I need not ask you, for you betrayed it, when you knew not what you said, and it was confirmed by your whole conduct. To shield Edward from blame or punishment, by never revealing his faults?”

“Was it wrong!” murmured Ellen, hiding her conscious face.

“Wrong in you! no, dearest; for you were too young to know all the pain and evil it was likely to bring. Tell me, when and how it was taken; and I think I can prove to you that your poor mother would have recalled it, had she had the least idea of the solemn hold it had taken upon you.”

Thus encouraged, Ellen narrated the scene that had taken place in Widow Morgan's cottage just before Mrs. Hamilton arrived; and her mother's fears for Edward, and dread of Mr. Hamilton, which it was very evident, and now more than ever, had extended to both her children. She said that Mr. Myrvin's assurance, that her mother could see, and would love her in Heaven, directly following the promise, had given it still more weight and solemnity. That at first she thought it would be very easy to keep, because she loved Edward so dearly; but she had not been long at

Oakwood before it made her very unhappy, from its constant interference with, and prevention of, her obedience and duty to her aunt ; that it had often caused her violent headaches, only from her vain attempts to satisfy herself as to that which she ought to do. When Edward first went to sea, and all seemed so right and happy with him, of course she became happier than she had ever been before. Then came his difficulties, and her conviction that she must save him and keep his secret. That her reason and her affection often urged her to confide all to her aunt, certain that she would not harshly condemn Edward, but would forgive, and help him far more effectually than she could ; but she dared not, for whenever she thought thus the figure of her mother rose before her, seeming to reproach and threaten her for exposing the child she so dearly loved to disgrace and ruin ; and this was so vivid—so constant—during his last appeal, that she thought she must be going mad ; that nothing but the dread of not being firm enough to keep Edward's secret, had withheld her from confessing her sin at once to her aunt, especially when her uncle had so solemnly denounced it as theft, and that when it was discovered it seemed actual relief, though it brought such severe punishment, for she knew no suffering for her could be too severe.

The tale, as Ellen told it, was brief and simple enough, and that there was any merit in such a system of self-devotion never seemed to enter her mind for a moment ; but to Mrs. Hamilton it revealed such an amount of suffering and trial, such a quiet, systematic, heroic endurance, that she unconsciously drew that young delicate being closer and closer to her, as if her

love should protect her in future from any such trial ;— and from what had it all sprung ? the misery of years, at a period when life should be so joyous and so free, that care and sorrow flee it as too purely and too briefly happy to approach ? From a few thoughtless words, from a thoughtless partial mother, whose neglect and dislike had pronounced that disposition cold, unloving and inanimate whose nature was so fervid, so imaginative, that the utmost care should have been taken to prevent the entrance of a single thought or feeling too precocious, too solemn for her years. It may be urged, and with truth, that to an ordinary child the promise might have been forgotten, or heedlessly laid aside, without any harm accruing from it, but it was from not caring to know the real character of the little being, for whose happiness and virtue she was responsible, that the whole mischief sprung ; and it is this neglect of maternal duty, against which we would so earnestly warn those who may not have thought about it. It is *not enough* to educate the mind, to provide bodily necessities, to be indulgent in the gift of pleasure and amusement, the *heart* must be won and taught ; and to do so with any hope of success, the character must be transparent as the day : and what difficulty, what hinderance, can there or ought there to be in obtaining this important knowledge to a mother, from whose breast the babe has received its nourishment, from whose arms it has gradually slipped away to feel its own independence, from whose lips it has received its first lessons, at whose knee lisped its first prayer ? How comparatively trifling the care, how easy the task to learn the opening disposition and natural character,

so as to guide with gentleness and love, and create happiness, not for childhood alone, though that is much, but for youth and maturity!

All these thoughts passed through Mrs. Hamilton's mind as she listened to her niece, and looked at the pale sweet face lifted up to hers in the earnestness of her simple tale, as if unconsciously appealing for her protection against the bewildering and contending feelings of her own young heart. How she was effectually to remove these impressions of years indeed she knew not; her heart seemed to pray for guidance that peace might at length be Ellen's portion, even as she heard.

"You could scarcely have acted otherwise than you have always done towards Edward, my dear Ellen, under the influence of such a promise," she said; "your extreme youth, naturally enough, could not permit you to distinguish, whether it was called for by a mere impulse of feeling in your poor mother, or really intended. But tell me, do you think it would give me any comfort or happiness if I could see Emmeline act by Percy as you have done by Edward? To see her suffer pain and sorrow, and be led into error, too, sometimes, to conceal Percy's faults, and prevent their removal, when, by the infliction of some trifling pain, it would save his exposing himself to greater?"

"But it seems so different with my cousins, Aunt; they are all such equals. I cannot fancy Emmeline in my place. You have always loved them all alike."

"And do you not think a mother ought to do so, dearest?"

“But how can she, if they are not all equally deserving? I was so different to Edward: he was so handsome and good, and so animated and happy; and I was always fretful and ill, and they said so often naughty; and he used to fondle poor Mamma, and show his love, which I was afraid to do, though I did love her so *very* much (the tears started to her eyes), so I could not help feeling he must be much better than I was, just as I always feel all my cousins are, and so it was no wonder poor Mamma loved him so much the best.”

“Have I ever made any difference between Edward and you, Ellen?” asked Mrs. Hamilton, conquering with no small effort, the emotion called forth by Ellen’s simple words.

“Oh, no, no!” and she clung to her in almost painful emotion. “But you are so good, so kind to everybody; you would love me, and be kind to me as poor Papa was, because nobody else could.”

“My dear Ellen, what can I do to remove these mistaken impressions? I love you, and your father loved you, because you have qualities claiming our love quite as powerfully as your brother. You must not imagine because you may be less personally and mentally favoured, that you are *inferior* to him, either in the sight of your Heavenly Father, or of the friends and guardians He has given you. And even if such were the case, and you were as undeserving as you so wrongly imagine yourself, my duty, as that of your mother, would be just the same. A parent does not love and guide her children according to their individual merits, my dear Ellen, but

according to the fountain of love which, to enable her to do her duty, God has so mercifully placed in her heart ; and therefore those who have the least attractions and the most faults, demand the greater cherishing to supply the place of the one, and more careful guiding to overcome the other. Do you quite understand me, love ?”

Ellen’s earnest face, on which joy and hope seemed struggling with doubt, was sufficient answer.

“All mothers do not think of their solemn responsibility in the same light ; and many causes,—sad recollections and self-reproaches for her early life, and separation in coldness from her father and myself, might all have tended to weaken your mother’s consciousness of her duty, and so, without any fault in yourself, my Ellen, have occasioned her too great partiality for Edward. But do you remember her last words ?”

Ellen did remember them, and acknowledged they had so increased her affection for her mother, as to render the promise still more sacred to her.

“I feared so, dearest ; but it is just the contrary effect which they should have had. When she called you to her, and blessed and kissed you as fondly as she did Edward, she said she had done you injustice, had failed in her duty to you, and it so grieved her, for it was too late to atone for it then ; she could only pray to God to raise you up a kinder parent. I have tried to be that, for her sake, as well as your own ; and will you not acknowledge, that if she had been spared to love and know your affection for her, she could no more have borne to see you suffer as you have done for Edward, than I

could my Emmeline for Percy? Do you not think, when she had learned to feel as I do, which she had already begun to do, that she would not have recalled that fatal promise, and entreated you not to act upon it? what has it ever done but to make you so painfully suffer, lead you often into error, and confirm by concealment Edward's faults?"

Ellen's tears were falling fast and freely, but they were hardly tears of pain. Her aunt's words seemed to disperse a thick mist from her brain and heart, and for the first time, to satisfy her that she might dismiss the painful memory of her promise, and dismiss it without blame or disobedience to her mother.

Mrs. Hamilton had begun the conversation in trembling, for it seemed so difficult to accomplish her object without undue condemnation of her sister; but as Ellen, clasping her arms about her neck, tried to thank her again and again, for taking such a heavy load from her heart, saying that she would still love, still help Edward just the same, and she would try to guard him and herself from doing wrong, that her mother should love her still, she felt she had succeeded, and silently, but how fervently, thanked God.

"But will you tell me one thing, Aunt Emmeline? Why, if the promise were mistaken, and poor Mamma would have wished it recalled, did I always seem to see her so distinctly, and fancy she so desired me to save Edward from my uncle's displeasure?"

"Because you have a very strong imagination, my love, increased by dwelling on this subject; and in your last trial your mind was in such a fearful and unnatural

state of excitement, that your imagination became actually diseased. It was not at all surprising ; for much older and stronger and wiser persons would have experienced the same, under the same pressure of grief, and terror and remorse. But what can I do to cure this morbid imagination, Ellen?" she continued, playfully ; "sentence you, as soon as you get well, to a course of mathematics, six hours each day?"

"I am afraid my poor head will be more stupid at figures than ever," replied Ellen, trying to smile too.

"Then I suppose I must think of something else. Will you follow Emmeline's example, and tell me everything, however foolish or unfounded it may seem, that comes into this little head—whether it worries or pleases you? You have nothing, and you will have nothing ever again, I trust, to conceal from me, my dear Ellen; and if you will do this, you will give me more comfort individually, and more security for the furtherance of your happiness, as far as my love can promote it, than any other plan."

Her playfulness had given place to renewed earnestness, and Ellen, as if in the very thought of such perfect confidence dwelt security and peace, so long unknown to her, gave the required assurance so eagerly and gratefully, that Mrs. Hamilton was satisfied and happy.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LOSS OF THE SYREN.

FROM that day Ellen's recovery, though a sad trial of patience both to the young invalid and her affectionate nurses, was surely progressive, without any of those painful relapses which had so tried Mr. Maitland's skill before. She no longer shrunk from the society of her relations, receiving Caroline's and Miss Harcourt's many kind attentions with surprise indeed, for she could not imagine what could so have altered their feelings towards her, but with that evident gratitude and pleasure which encourages a continuance of kindness. Emmeline was always kind, but it was indeed happiness to feel she might talk with and share her amusements, as in former days ; and that, instead of thinking she ought not to receive her aunt's affection, the only thing she asked in return was her full confidence. The inexpressible rest to poor Ellen which that conversation gave is not to be described. It was so blessed, so soothing, that it seemed too unnatural to last, and the secret dread that her uncle would not feel towards her and Edward as her aunt did was its only alloy. Edward, too, was cheerful, and almost happy when with her ; and a long conversation with

Mr. Howard, which that worthy man insisted upon having as soon as she was strong enough, to remove the false impressions which his severity had given, and which never ceased to grieve and reproach him, caused his almost daily visits to be anticipated by her with as much gladness as they had before brought dread.

“And now that anxiety for Ellen is at end, I must have you take more care of yourself, Mrs. Hamilton. Your husband’s last injunctions were that I should never pass a week without calling once or twice at Oakwood to know how all was going on, and what would he say to me if he could see you now?”

“He little thought how my strength would be tried, my good friend, and so will quite acquit you. I assure you that, physically, I am perfectly well,”—(the worthy doctor shook his head most unbelievably,)—“but even with one great anxiety calmed, there remains another, which every week increases. It is more than double the usual time of hearing from my husband. We have never had any answer to the letters detailing Ellen’s danger and Edward’s return, and the answers have been due a full month.”

“But the weather has been so unusually tempestuous, it may have been impossible for the Syren to ply to and fro from Feroe to Scotland, as Hamilton wished, and no ships are likely to touch at those islands in the winter. I really think you need not be anxious on that score; none but Arthur Hamilton’s head could have contrived your hearing as regularly from such an outlandish place as you have done. No news is good news, depend upon

it. He may be anxious at your account, and returning himself."

"God forbid!" answered Mrs. Hamilton, turning very pale; "better the anxiety of not hearing from him than the thought of his being at sea in this season."

Oakwood had resumed its regular happy aspect, though Ellen was still upstairs. Morris and Ellis had once more the happiness of their beloved mistress's superintendence, and proud were they both, as if Caroline had been their own child, to show all she had done, and so unostentatiously, to save her mother trouble, when she had been too anxious to think of anything but Ellen; and the mother's heart swelled with a delicious feeling of gratitude to Him who, if in making her so acutely sensible of her solemn responsibility, had deepened and extended *anxiety*, and had in the same measure heightened and spiritualized *joy*. The fruit was indeed worth the nurture, though it might have been often washed with tears. Intensely anxious as she felt herself, as did also Mr. Howard and Mr. Maitland, and, in fact, all Arthur Hamilton's friends, she yet tried to sustain the spirits of her children, for the young men had evidently grown anxious on the subject too. It was not unlikely that the seas round Feroe, always stormy, should prevent any ship leaving the island, and the young people eagerly grasped the idea: so painful is it to youth to realize a cause for anxiety; but even they, at times, grew unconsciously sad and meditating, as the usually joyous season of Christmas and New Year passed, and still there was no letter. Ellen and Edward both in secret dreaded the

arrival of the answer to the latter's confession ; but still their affection for Mrs. Hamilton was too powerful to permit any thought of self interfering with the wish that her anxiety might be calmed.

In January the weather changed ; the tremendous winds gave place to an almost unnatural calm, and to such excessive mildness and closeness of atmosphere, that it affected the health of many who were strong, and not only made Ellen very languid, but frequently recalled those dreadful headaches which were in themselves an illness. Business called Mr. Howard to Dartmouth near the end of the month, and he prevailed on Edward to accompany him, for whenever his sister was more than usually suffering his gloom redoubled. The first few days were so fine that the change renovated him ; Mr. Howard declared it was the sight of old ocean, and Edward did not deny it ; for though it was good for the permanence of his repentance and resolution to amend, to have the influence of his home sufficiently long, his spirit inwardly chafed at his detention, and yearned to be at sea again, and giving proof of his determination to become indeed a British sailor.

The third day of their visit, the lull and heaviness of the air increased so strangely and closely for January as to seem almost portentous. Edward and Mr. Howard lingered on the beach ; the well-practised eye of the former tracing in many little things unseen to landsmen, the slow but sure approach of a fearful storm.

"It is strange for the season, but there is certainly electricity in the air," he said, directing Mr. Howard's attention to ridges of white-fringed clouds floating under

the heavens whose murky hue was becoming denser and denser, and ever and anon, as lashed by some as yet silent and invisible blast, the ocean heaved and foamed, and gave sure evidence of approaching fury; "there will be, I fear, a terrible storm to-night; and look at those birds,—(several sea-gulls were skimming along the waves, almost bathing their white plumage in the blackened waters,)—strange how they always herald tempest! Emmeline would call them spirits of the blast revelling in the destruction it foretells!"

"It is approaching already," rejoined Mr. Howard, as a long hollow blast moaned and shivered round them, followed by the roar of a mountainous wave bursting on the beach. "God have mercy on all exposed to its fury!" and he gladly turned more inland, while Edward remained watching its progress with an almost pleasurable feeling of excitement, only wishing he could but be on the sea, to enjoy it as such a storm deserved to be.

As the day drew to a close it increased, and as darkness set in, its fury became appalling. Blasts, long and loud as the reverberation of artillery, succeeded one another with awful rapidity, tearing up huge trees by the roots, and tiles from the roofs. Now and then, at distant intervals, blue lightning played through the black heavens, betraying that thunder had mingled with the wind, though it was impossible to distinguish the one sound from the other; and as the gusts passed onwards, streaks of white and spots of strange unnatural blue gleamed through the gloom for a moment's space, leaving deeper darkness as they disappeared. The ocean, lashed to wildest fury, rolled in huge mountains of

troubled waters, throwing up showers of snowy foam, contrasting strangely with the darkness of earth and heaven, and bursting with a sound that deadened for the time even the wild roar of the blast. To read or even to converse, in their comfortable quarters in the hotel, which overlooked the sea, became as impossible to Mr. Howard as to Edward. About eleven o'clock, however, the wind suddenly veered and lulled, only sending forth now and then a long sobbing wail, as if regretful that its work of destruction was even checked; but the sea raged with equal fury, presenting a spectacle as magnificent, as awful, and giving no appearance of a calm. A sharp report sounded suddenly from the sea—whether it was the first, or that others might have been lost in the tumult of the winds and waves, who might answer! Another, and another, at such rapid intervals, that the danger was evidently imminent, and Edward started to his feet. Again—and he could bear it no longer. Hurriedly exclaiming, “They are signals of distress, and close at hand! Something must be done; no sailor can sit still, and see sailors perish!” he rushed to the beach, closely followed by Mr. Howard, who was resolved on preventing any mad attempt. Crowds of fishermen and townsmen had congregated on the beach, drawn by that fearful sound, which, by the light from the guns, seemed scarcely half a mile distant; and yet so perilous was the present appearance of the ocean, that to go to their assistance seemed impossible. Suddenly, however, Edward’s voice exclaimed, with the glad and eager tone of perfect confidence, “They can be saved!—a strong boat and two willing rowers, and I will undertake to reach the vessel, and

bring the crew safe to shore. "Who among you," he continued, turning eagerly to the group of hardy fishermen, "will be my assistants in this act of common humanity? who possesses willing hearts and able hands, and will lend them?"

"No man who cares for his life!" was the sullen answer from one of those he addressed, and the rest stood silent, eying half disdainfully, half admiringly the slight figure of the young sailor, revealed as it was in the fitful light of the many torches scattered by the various groups along the beach. "It is well for boys to talk, we cannot expect old heads on young shoulders; but not a boat with my consent leaves the harbour to-night; it would be wilful murder."

"I tell you I will stake my life on the venture," answered Edward, his passion rising high. "Am I speaking to sailors, and can they hesitate, when they hear such sounds? Give me but a boat, and I will go by myself: and when you need aid, may you find those to give it! you will scarce dare ask it, if that vessel perish before your eyes. Lend me a boat, I say, fitted for such a sea, and the lender shall be rewarded handsomely. If there be such risk, I ask none to share it; my life is my own, and I will peril it."

It would have made a fine scene for a painter, that young slight form and boyish face, surrounded by those weatherbeaten men, every countenance expressing some different emotion, yet almost all unwilling admiration; the torches' glare, so lurid on the pitchy darkness; the sheets of foam, rising and falling like showers of dazzling snow; the craggy background; and out at sea the un-

fortunate vessel, a perfect wreck, struggling still with the fast rising waters. Mr. Howard saw all, but with no thought of the picturesque, his mind was far otherwise engaged.

“By Neptune! but your honour shall not go alone! I have neither parent, nor sister, nor wife to pipe for me, if I go, so my life must be of less moment than yours, and if you can so peril it, why should not I?” exclaimed a stalwart young fisherman, advancing, and Edward eagerly grasped his rough hand, conjuring him to get his boat at once, there was not a moment to lose; but the example was infectious, and an old man hastily stepped forward, declaring the youngsters had taught him his duty, and he would do it.

“Great God! what do they say?” exclaimed Edward, as his younger companion hastened down the beach to bring his boat to the leeward of the cliff, to launch it more securely, and a rumour ran through the crowds, whence arising it was impossible to discover. “The Syren—Captain Harvey—my uncle’s ship!—and he must be in her—she would never leave Feroe without him. What foundation is there for this rumour? let me know, for God’s sake!”

But none could tell more than that a vessel, entering the harbour just before the gale, had hailed the Syren, about twenty miles distant, and she seemed labouring heavily, and in such a distressed state that a very little would finish her. Not a word escaped Edward’s lips, which grew for the moment blanched as marble. Mr. Howard to whom the rumour had brought the

most intense agony, for not a doubt of its truth would come to relieve him, was at his side, grasping his hand, and murmuring, hoarsely—

“Edward, my poor boy, must your life be perilled, too?—both—both—this is awful!”

“Let me but save *him*, and if I perish, it will be in a good cause. Tell Aunt Emmeline, I know she will comfort my poor Ellen; and that the boy she has saved from worse misery than death, did all he could to save her husband! and if I fail,”—he stopped in strong emotion, then added,—“give Ellen this, and this,” he cut off a lock of his hair with his dirk, and placed it and his watch in Mr. Howard’s trembling hand. “And now, my friend, God bless you, and reward you, too!” He threw himself a moment in Mr. Howard’s arms, kissed his cheek, and, darting down the beach, leaped into the boat, which was dancing like a nutshell on the water. It was several minutes, ere they could succeed in getting her off, the waves seeming determined to cast her back; but they were fairly launched at length, and then they heeded not that one minute they rode high on a mountain wave, seeming as if nothing could save them from being dashed in the abyss below, the next were buried in a deep valley, surrounded by huge walls of water, threatening to burst and overwhelm them. For a boat to live in such a sea at all seemed miraculous; and Old Collins always declared that unless some angel sat at the helm with Edward, no human arm could have taken them in safety. If it were an angel, it was the pure thought, the faith-winged prayer, that he might be the instrument

in the Eternal's hand, of turning aside death and misery from that beloved home, in which even his errors had been met with *love*, and conquered by *forgiveness*.

With every effort, and they were such as to bid the perspiration stream down the face and arms of those strong men, and almost exhaust Edward, for he took an oar in turn, it was full an hour from their leaving the shore before they reached the ship. She had ceased firing, for by the lights on shore they had discovered the boat's departure, and watched her progress by the lantern at her head, as only those can watch who feel one short hour more and their ship will float no longer!

Collins was spokesman, for Edward, as they grappled the boat alongside, had sunk down for the moment powerless by the helm; roused, however, effectually by the answer—

“The Syren—bound to Dartmouth—from Feroe—owner Arthur Hamilton, passenger now on board—nine in crew.”

“In with you all then—that is Captain Harvey's voice, I'll be sworn; the rumour was only too true.”

“Ay, Old Collins! returned; we thought to perish in sight of our own homes; now, Mr. Hamilton,—not a man will stir till you are safe!”

His companion leaped into the boat without reply, and, sinking on one of the benches, drew his cloak closely round his face. Peril was indeed still around him, but compared with the—even to that Heaven-directed heart—terrible struggle of beholding death, rising slowly but surely round him in the water-filling ship, within

almost sight and sound of his home, his beloved ones, the mere *hope* of life seemed almost overpowering. The crew of the hapless Syren quickly deserted her. Captain Harvey was the last to descend, and, as he did so, a block of iron, loosened from its place, fell cornerwise, and struck sharply on Edward's forehead, almost stunning him for the moment, as he watched the captain's descent. He felt the blood slowly trickling down his temple and cheek ; but he was not one to be daunted by pain : he resumed his station at the helm in unbroken silence, only speaking when directions were absolutely necessary, and then only in a few brief sailor-terms. They had scarcely proceeded a third of their way, when the waters boiled and foamed as tossed by some strange whirlpool, and it required all Edward's address and skill as steersman to prevent the frail boat from being drawn into the vortex. The cause was soon displayed, and every heart shuddered, for ten minutes later, and help would indeed have been in vain. The unfortunate vessel had sunk—been swallowed up in those rushing waters ; the suction of so large a mass, producing for a brief interval the effect of a whirlpool. The silence of awe and of intense thankfulness, fell on the heart of every man, and more than all on his, who had so far recovered his first emotion as to gaze wonderingly and admiringly on the boyish figure at the helm, whose voice was utterly unknown, and whose features the fitful light, and the youth's stedfast gaze on his rowers, prevented his tracing with any certainty.

The crowds had increased on the shore, watching with intense eagerness the return of the boat ; but the

expectation was too deep for sound, silence almost portentous reigned. A huge sea had concealed her for several minutes, and Mr. Howard, who during these two long hours had remained spell-bound on the beach, groaned aloud in his agony; again she was visible, driven on with fearful velocity by the tide, nearer, nearer still. He thought he could distinguish the figure of his friend: he was sure he could hear the voice of Edward, urging, commanding, directing a landing somewhere, in contradiction to the opinion of others. They were within a dozen yards of the shore, but still not a sound of gratulation was heard. Every eye was fixed, as in the fascination of terror, on a wave in the distance, increasing in size and fury as it rapidly approached. It neared the boat—it stood impending over the frail thing as a mighty avalanche of waters—it burst; the boat was seen no longer, and a wild and terrible cry sounded far and near along the beach!

CHAPTER XII.

FOREBODINGS.

THE whole of the day Mrs. Hamilton had vainly tried to shake off a most unwonted gloom. Convinced herself that it was greatly physical, from the unusual oppressiveness of the weather relaxing the nerves, which had so many months been overstrained, yet her thoughts would cling to Mr. Maitland's words, that her husband might be coming home himself; but if the accounts of Ellen's danger and Edward's confession had recalled him, he ought to have arrived full two or three weeks previous. The gale that swept round her, the awful and unnatural darkness—the remarkable phenomena at that season of lightning—and the long loud thunder-claps* which inland could be fearfully distinguished from the gale, appalled the whole household; and therefore it was not much wonder that the vague idea of her husband's having left Feroe, and exposure to such a

* These storms, as occurring in Devonshire, in both January and February, are no creation of the imagination; the author has heard them herself, and more than one officer in the Preventive Service has mentioned them as occurring during the night-watches, and of awful violence.

tempest, should become in that fearful anxiety almost a certainty of agony. It was well, perhaps, that her unselfish nature had an object to draw her in some slight degree out of herself, for her firmness, her trust beyond the accidents of earth, all seemed about to fail her, and make her for the time being most wretched. As the storm and closeness increased, so did Ellen's feverish restlessness: her nerves, not yet fully restored, felt strung almost to torture, with every flash and clap and blast. She tried to laugh at her own folly, for though often terrified when a little child at the storms in India, those of England had never affected her at all, and she could not understand why she should feel this so childishly. But argument is of little moment in such cases; and Mrs. Hamilton, satisfying her that she could no more help her present sensation than her physical weakness, tried to soothe and amuse her, and in so doing partially cheered herself. She did not leave her till past midnight, and then desiring Mrs. Langford to sit up with her till she was comfortably asleep, retired to her own bedroom. Never since her husband's absence had its solitude felt so vast—so heavily oppressive; thought after thought of him thronged her mind till she fairly gave up the effort to struggle with them. "Will his voice ever sound here again, his heart give me the support I need?" rose to her lips, as she gazed round her, and the deep stillness, the gloom only broken by a small silver lamp, and the fitful light of the fire seemed but a solemn answer. She buried her face in her clasped hands, and the clock struck two before that inward conflict permitted her once more to lift up heart and brow in

meek-trusting faith to Him, who still watched over her and her beloved ones ; and after an earnest voiceless prayer, she drew her little table, with its books of devotion to the fire, and read thoughtfully, prayerfully, for another hour, and then sought her couch. But she could not sleep ; the wind had again arisen, and fearing to lie awake and listen to it would only renew her unusual agitation, she rose at four, dressed herself, and throwing on a large shawl, softly traversed the passage, and entered her niece's room ; finding her, as she fully expected, as wakeful and restless as herself, with the addition of an intense headache. She had persuaded Nurse Langford to go to bed, but the pain had come on since then, and made her more restless and feverish than before. She could not lie in any posture to get ease, till at last, about six o'clock, completely exhausted, she fell asleep, sitting almost upright in her aunt's arms, her head leaning against her as she stood by the bedside. Fearing to disturb her, Mrs. Hamilton would not move, desiring the morning prayers to be said without her, and Miss Harcourt and her daughters not to wait breakfast, as she would have it with Ellen when she awoke. That she was stiff and exhausted with three hours' standing in one position she did not heed, perhaps scarcely felt, for woman's loveliest attribute, that of a tender and utterly unselfish nurse, was hers to perfection. But she did not refuse the cup of chocolate Caroline brought her herself, and with affectionate earnestness entreated her to take.

" You look so fatigued and so pale, dearest Mother, I wish you would let me take your place ; I would be so

quiet, so gentle, Ellen would not even know her change of nurses."

"I do not doubt your care, love, but I fear the least movement will disturb this poor child, and she has had such a restless night, I want her to sleep as long as she can. Your thoughtful care has so refreshed me, that I feel quite strong again, so go and finish your breakfast in comfort, dearest."

Caroline very unwillingly obeyed, and about a quarter of an hour afterwards, Mrs. Hamilton was startled by the sound of a carriage advancing with unusual velocity to the house. It stopped at the main entrance, and she had scarcely time to wonder who could be such very early visitors, when a loud scream in the voice of Emmeline rung in her ears; whether of joy or grief she could not distinguish, but it was the voice of her child, and the already tortured nerves of the wife and mother could not hear it without a sensation of terror, amounting to absolute agony. She laid Ellen's head tenderly on the pillow, watched over her, though her limbs so trembled she could scarcely support herself, saw with intense relief that the movement had not disturbed her quiet sleep, and calling Mrs. Langford from an adjoining room, hastily descended the stairs, though how she did so, and entered the breakfast-room, she always said she never knew. Many and eager and glad voices were speaking at once; the very servants thronged the hall and threshold of the room, but all made way for her.

"Arthur!—my husband!" she did find voice to ex-

claim, but every object but his figure reeled before her, and she fainted in his arms.

It was some time before she recovered, for mind and frame had been too long overtaken; and Mr. Hamilton, as he clasped her in his arms, beseeching her only to speak to him, and gazed on her death-like countenance, felt in a moment that great as his anxiety had been for her, he had not imagined one half she had endured. His voice—his kiss—seemed to rouse the scattered senses, even more effectually than Miss Harcourt's anxiously proffered remedies; but she could not speak, she only looked up in his face, as if to be quite, quite sure he had indeed returned; that her vague fancies of danger, even if they had foundation, had merged in the most blissful reality, that she was no longer *alone*, and, leaning her head on his bosom, was only conscious of a thankfulness too deep for words; a repose that, since his departure, she had not known for a single day. Neither she nor her husband could believe that it was only six months since they had been separated. It seemed, and to Mrs. Hamilton especially, as if she must have lived through years in that time, it had been so fraught with sorrow.

“Not one word, my own dearest! and only these pallid cheeks and heavy eyes to greet me. Must I reproach you directly I come home for, as usual, not thinking enough of yourself; forgetting how precious is that self to so many, your husband, above all?”

“Nay, Papa, you shall not scold Mamma,” said Emmeline, eagerly, as her mother tried to smile and speak in answer. “She ought to scold you, for not

sending us one line to prepare us for your unexpected presence, and frightening us all by coming so suddenly upon us, and making Mamma faint as I never saw her do before. Indeed I do not like it, Mother, darling!" continued the affectionate girl, kneeling down by her mother, and clinging to her, adding, in a suppressed terrified voice, "It was so like death."

Mrs. Hamilton read in a moment that Emmeline's playfulness was only assumed to hide strong emotion; that she was trying very hard for complete control, but so trembling, that she knelt down, literally because she could not stand. It was such a proof of her endeavour to profit by her mother's gentle lessons, that even at that moment it not only gave her the sweetest gratification, but helped her to rouse herself.

"Indeed, I think you are perfectly right, Emmy," she said, quite in her usual voice, as she pressed her child a moment to her, and kissed her cheek, which was almost as pale as her own. "I will not submit to any scolding, when Papa himself is answerable for my unusual weakness; but as we wanted him so *very* much, why we will be lenient with him, and only keep him prisoner with us for some time to come. But get him breakfast quickly, Caroline, love: such an early visitor must want it. When did you arrive, dearest Arthur?" she added, looking earnestly in his face, and half wondering at the expression upon it, it seemed to speak so many things; "surely not this morning? You were not at sea in yesterday's awful storm?"

"I was indeed, my Emmeline; can you bear to hear it, or have you been agitated enough already? I have

been in danger, great danger, but our Father's infinite mercy has preserved me to you all, making the instrument of my preservation so young a lad and slight a frame, I know not how sufficiently to bless God, or to thank my preserver."

Mrs. Hamilton's hand closed convulsively on her husband's; her eyes riveted on his countenance as if she would grasp his whole meaning at once, but little did she guess the whole.

"I did not come alone," he added, striving for composure, and even playfulness, "though it seems I was such an important personage, as to be the only one seen or thought about."

"By the bye, I did see, or fancied I saw, Edward," rejoined Caroline who, at the news of her father having been in danger, had left the breakfast-table, unable to keep away from him, even that short distance, but neither she, nor either of the others, connecting her cousin with Mr. Hamilton's words, and not quite understanding why he should have so interrupted the most interesting subject. "He has gone to see Ellen, I suppose, and so we have missed him. Was he your companion, Papa? How and where did you meet him?"

"Let him answer for himself!" replied Mr. Hamilton, still determinately hiding his feelings under a tone and manner of jest, and leaving his wife's side for a moment, he drew Edward from the recess of the window, where all this time he had been standing quite unobserved, and led him forward.

"Good heavens! Edward, what have you been about?" exclaimed Miss Harcourt, and her exclamation was

echoed by Caroline and Emmeline, while Mrs. Hamilton gazed at him in bewildered alarm. He was deadly pale, with every appearance of exhaustion, and a most disfiguring patch on his left brow, which he had tried in vain to hide with his hair.

“You have been fighting?”

“Only with the elements, Miss Harcourt, and they have rather tired me, that is all; I shall be well in a day or two. Don’t look so terrified, dear Aunt,” he answered, with the same attempt at jest as his uncle, and throwing himself lightly on an ottoman by Mrs. Hamilton, he laid his head very quietly on her lap.

“Fighting—and with the elements? Arthur, dearest Arthur, for pity’s sake tell me the whole truth at once; it cannot be—”

“And why should it not, my beloved?” (there was no attempt at jest now.) “He to whom your care has preserved a sister—whom your indulgent love has given courage to resolve that error shall be conquered, and he will become all we can wish him—whom you took to your heart and home when motherless—God has mercifully made the instrument of saving your husband from a watery grave, and giving back their father to your children!”

“To be associated in your heart with other thoughts than those of ingratitude, and cruelty, and sin! oh, Aunt Emmeline, I cannot thank God enough for permitting me this great mercy,” were the only words poor Edward could speak, when the first intensity of his aunt’s emotion was in some degree conquered, and she could look in his young face, though her eyes were almost blinded

with tears, and putting back the bright hair which the rain and spray had so uncurled, as to lay heavy and damp upon his pale forehead, she imprinted a long silent kiss upon it, and looking alternately at him and her husband, seemed powerless to realize any other thought.

Mr. Hamilton briefly, but most eloquently, narrated the events of the previous night, dwelling only sufficiently on his imminent peril, to evince the real importance of Edward's extraordinary exertions, not to harrow the feelings of his listeners more than need be. That the young officer's determined opposition to the almost angrily expressed opinions of Captain Harvey and Old Collins as to the better landing-place, had saved them from the effects of the huge wave, which had burst like a water-spout a minute after they had all leaped in safety on shore, almost overwhelming the projecting sand to which Collins had wished to direct the boat, and so proving at once Edward's far superior nautical knowledge, for had they steered there, the frail bark must inevitably have been upset, and its crew washed by the receding torrent back to sea. Harvey and Collins acknowledged their error at once, and looked eagerly for Edward to say so to him, but he had vanished the moment they had achieved a safe landing, to Mr. Hamilton's annoyance, for he had not had the least suspicion who he was, and only longed to express, if he could not otherwise evince, his gratitude. Collins and Grey refusing the smallest credit, declaring that if it had not been for this young stranger officer, of whom they knew nothing, not even his name, not a man would have stirred; that for any fisherman or mere ordinary sailor

to have guided the boat to and from the sinking vessel, in such a sea, was so impossible, that no one would have attempted it; Old Collins ending, with the superstition of his class, by a declaration, that his disappearance convinced his already more than suspicion, that it was some good angel in a boy's likeness; for Arthur Hamilton would never have been permitted so to perish: an explanation, Mr. Hamilton added, laughingly, that might suit his Emmy, but was rather too fanciful for him. However, his young preserver was nowhere to be found, but, to his extreme astonishment, and no little relief (for now that he was so near home, his anxiety to hear of all, especially Ellen, whom he scarcely dared hope to find alive, became insupportable), Mr. Howard suddenly stood before him, grasping both his hands, without the power for a minute or two to speak. Mr. Hamilton overwhelmed him with questions, scarcely giving him time to answer one before he asked another. They had nearly reached the hotel, when Captain Harvey's bluff voice was heard exclaiming—

“Here he is, Mr. Hamilton! he is too exhausted to escape our thanks and blessings now. What could the youngster have tried to hide himself for?”

But before Mr. Hamilton could make any rejoinder, save to grasp the young man's hands strongly in his own, Mr. Howard said, eagerly—

“Oblige me, Captain Harvey; take that boy into our hotel, it is only just round the corner; make him take off his dripping jacket, and give him some of your sailor's stuff. He is not quite strong enough for his exertions to-night, and should rest at once.”

Captain Harvey bore him off, almost carrying him, for exertion and a variety of emotions had rendered him faint and powerless.

“Do you know him, Howard? who and what is he?” But Mr. Howard did not, perhaps could not reply, but hurried his friend on to the hotel; and entered the room, where, having called for lights and all the ingredients of grog-punch, which he vowed the boy should have instead of the brandy and water he had called for, they found Edward trying to laugh, and protesting against all coddling; he was perfectly well, and he would not go to bed, and he could not imagine what right Captain Harvey had to be a sailor, if he thought so much of a storm, and a blow, and a wetting.

“Nor should I, if you were sailor-rigged; but what business have you with this overgrown mast of a figure, and a face pale and delicate as a woman’s?”

And so like his dying mother it was, that Mr. Hamilton stood for a moment on the threshold, completely stupefied. We leave our readers to imagine the rest; and how Captain Harvey carried the seemingly marvellous news that the brave young officer was Mr. Hamilton’s own nephew over the town, and in every fisherman’s hut, in a miraculously short space of time.

We may as well state here at once, to save farther retrospection, that Mr. Hamilton, by the active and admirable assistance of Morton, had, after a three months’ residence at Feroe, perceived that he might return to England much sooner than he had at first anticipated; still he did not like to mention even the probability of such a thing to his family, till perfectly certain

himself. Morton never ceased persuading him to name a period for his return, knowing the comfort it would be to his home ; but Mr. Hamilton could not bear the idea of leaving his friend in his voluntary banishment so many months sooner than they had reckoned on. When, however, the letters came from Oakwood, detailing Edward's return, and the discoveries thence proceeding, his anxiety and, let it be owned, his extreme displeasure against his nephew, prompted his return at once. Morton not only conquered every objection to his immediate departure, but tried, and in some measure succeeded, to soften his anger, by bringing before him many points in Mr. Howard's letter, showing real good and true repentance in the offender, which a first perusal of a narrative of error had naturally overlooked. The seas, however, were so fearfully tempestuous and the winds so adverse, that it was impossible either to leave Feroe, or get a letter conveyed to Scotland, for a full fortnight after the Syren's last voyage. Nothing but the extreme urgency of the case, increased by the fact that the detention of the Syren at Wick had given Mr. Hamilton a double packet of letters, but the second, though dated ten days later, gave the same hopeless account of Ellen, could have made him attempt a voyage home in such weather ; yet he felt he could not rest, knowing intuitively the misery his wife must be enduring, and scarcely able to bear even the thought of what seemed most probable, that Ellen would be taken from her, and the aggravated trial it would be. The voyage was a terrible one, for length and heavy gales. More than once they wished to put into port, that Mr. Hamilton might con-

tinue his journey by land, but their only safety seemed keeping out at sea, the storm threatening to dash them on rock or shoal, whenever in sight of land.

By the time they reached the Land's End—they had come westward of England instead of eastward as they went—the vessel was in such a shattered and leaky condition, that Captain Harvey felt and acknowledged she could not weather out another storm. The calm that had followed the heavy gales gave hope to all; even though the constant shiftings of the wind, which was now not more than what in sailor's parlance is called a cat's-paw, prevented their making as much way as they desired. At length they were within twenty miles of Dartmouth, and not a doubt of their safety disturbed them, until the darkening atmosphere, the sullen rise and suppressed roar of the billows, the wind sobbing and wailing at first, and then bursting into that awful gale which we have before described, banished every human hope at once. The rudder snapped, every half-hour the water gained upon the hold, though every man worked at the pumps. There was not a shred of canvass, but the masts, and yards, and stays bent and snapped like reeds before the blast. To guide her was impossible; she was driven on—on—till she struck on a reef of rock about a mile or less perhaps from Dartmouth. Then came their signals of distress, as a last lone hope, for the crew of the Syren were all too good seamen to dare believe a boat could either be pushed off, or live in such a sea. Their wonder, their hope, their intense thankfulness, when it was discovered, may be imagined. The rest is known.

“And how did you get this disfiguring blow, my dear Edward?” inquired his aunt, whose eyes it seemed would turn upon him, as if impossible to connect that slight figure with such immense exertions,—though some time had passed, and a social, happy breakfast, round which all still lingered, had enabled them to subdue too painful emotion, and only to be conscious of the most deep and grateful joy.

“Pray do not call it disfiguring, Aunt; I am quite proud of it. Last night I could have dispensed with such a striking mark of affection from the poor Syren, though I really hardly felt it, except that the blood would trickle in my eye, and almost blind me, when I wanted all my sight and senses too. But this morning Mr. Howard has made such a kind fuss about it, that I think it must be something grand.”

“But what did you hide yourself for, Ned?” demanded Emmeline, all her high spirits recalled. Her cousin hesitated, and a flush mounted to his forehead.

“It was fear, Emmeline; absolute fear!”

“Fear!” she repeated, laughing; “of what? of all the bogies and spirits of the winds and the waves, whose wrath you dared by venturing to oppose them? Nonsense, Edward! you will never make me believe that.”

“Because you do not know me,” he answered with startling earnestness. “How can your gentle nature understand the incongruities of mine? or loving your father as you do, and as he deserves, comprehend the dread, the belief in his unpitied sternness to youthful error, which I imbibed from my childhood? He held—

he holds—my fate, forgiveness or exposure, and how could I meet him calmly? Emmeline, Emmeline, if I had been but as morally brave as I may be physically, I should have had nothing to dread, nothing to hide. As it is, Uncle Hamilton, judge, act, decide as you would, if I had not been the undeserved means of saving you—it will be the best for me ;” and rising hurriedly, he left the room before any one could reply.

“But you will forgive him, Papa ; you will try him again ; and I am sure he will be morally brave too,” pleaded Emmeline ; her sister and Miss Harcourt joining in the entreaty and belief, and Mrs. Hamilton looking in his face, without uttering a word. Mr. Hamilton’s answer seemed to satisfy all parties.

Ellen meanwhile had awoke, quite refreshed, and all pain gone, been dressed, and conveyed to her daily quarters, the events of the morning entirely unknown to her ; for though the joyful news, spreading like wild-fire through the house, had reached Mrs. Langford’s ears, and made her very happy, she had quite judgment enough, even without a message to that effect from her mistress, to keep it from Ellen till carefully prepared.

“What can I say to my little Ellen for deserting her so long ?” inquired Mrs. Hamilton, playfully as she entered her room, about twelve o’clock, after a long private conversation with her husband.

“I wish you would tell me you had been lying down, dear Aunt ; it would satisfy me better than any other reason.”

“Because you think it would do me the most good,

dearest. But look at me, and tell me if you do not think I must have been trying some equally efficacious remedy." Ellen did look, and so radiant was that kind face with happiness, that she was startled.

"What *has* happened, Aunt Emmeline? You have heard from my uncle," she added, her voice trembling.

"What does he say?—will he—"

"He says, you must summon all your smiles to greet him, love; for he hopes to be with us very *very* shortly, so you will not wonder at my joy?"

Ellen tried to sympathise in it; but Mrs. Hamiltou soon saw that her perhaps natural dread of what should be her uncle's judgment on her brother and herself, prevented all pleasurable anticipation in his arrival, and that the only effectual way of removing it was to let them meet as soon as possible.

CHAPTER XIII.

FORGIVENESS.

THREE days after Mr. Hamilton's arrival a cheerful party assembled in his wife's dressing-room, which, in its elegant appurtenances—signs as they were of a most refined and beautiful taste—certainly deserved a higher appellation; but boudoir, Percy had always declared did not harmonize at all with the old English comforts of Oakwood, and he would not have a French word to designate his mother's room especially. Ellen was on her sofa working; Edward, who she thought had only returned that morning, at her side reading; Caroline and Emmeline drawing, the one with some degree of perseverance, the other with none at all. It seemed as if she could not sit still, and her wild sallies and snatches of old songs repeatedly made Miss Harcourt look up from her book, and Mrs. Hamilton from her work, surprised.

“Emmeline, I *cannot* draw,” exclaimed Caroline, at length; “you are making the table as restless as yourself.”

“Why can you not say it was moved by an irresistible sympathy? It is most extraordinary that you will

still speak plain matter-of-fact, when I am doing all I can to make you poetical."

"But what am I to poetise on now, Emmeline?—the table or yourself? because at present they are the only subjects under consideration, and I really cannot see anything very poetical in either."

"Not even in *me*, Lina?" archly replied Emmeline, bending down, so that her face should come before her sister instead of her copy, which was a very pretty small marble figure. "Now, if you were not the most determined piece of prose in the world, you would find poetry even in my face."

"For, lo! the artist no more gazed
On features still and cold;
He stood, bewilder'd and amazed,
As living charms unfold.

"As if touch'd by yon orient ray,
The stone to life had warm'd;
For round the lip such bright smiles play,
As never sculptor form'd.

"There, Caroline, that is what you ought to have *felt*. If I can make poetry on my own face—"

"Poetry on yourself! Why, Emmeline, I thought you were repeating a verse of some old poet with which I am unacquainted. I really beg your pardon, I did not know your favorite Muse had dubbed you follower as well as worshipper."

"Nor did I till this moment. She feared for her reputation near such a lover of prose as you are, and so touched me with inspiration. I am exceedingly

obliged to her; but even if I failed to make you poetical, Caroline, you might have emulated Cowper, and instead of singing the ‘Sofa,’ sung the ‘Table.’ Indeed, I think a very pretty poem might be made of it. Look at the variety of tasteful and useful things laid on a table—and there it stands in the midst of them, immoveable, cold, insensible, just like one on whom we heap favours upon favours, and who remains so wrapped in self as to be utterly indifferent to all. Now, Caroline, put that into rhyme, or blank verse, if you prefer it; it is a new idea at least.”

“So new,” replied her sister, laughing, “that I think I will send it to Percy, and request him to turn it into a Greek or Latin ode; it will be so much grander than my English version. You have so astonished Mamma, Emmeline, by your mad mood, that she has actually put down her work.”

“I am so glad! replied Emmeline, springing to her mother’s side; “I like other people to be as idle as myself.”

“But there is a medium in all things, young lady,” answered her mother, half gravely, half in Emmeline’s own tone; “and I rather think your conscience is telling you, that it is not quite right to desert one Muse for another, as you are doing now.”

“Oh, but my drawing must wait till her Muse inspires me again. Poetry does not always come, and her visits are so delightful!”

“Then I am afraid you will think me very harsh, Emmeline; but delightful as they are, I must not have them always encouraged. If you encourage the idea of

only working when the fit of inspiration comes upon you—in plain words, only when you feel inclined—you will fritter life away without one solid thought or acquirement. You think now, perhaps, habituated as you are to employment, that this is impossible ; but you are just of an age to demand very strict watchfulness over yourself to prevent it. Now that you are emerging from the routine of childhood's lessons, and too old to be compelled to do that which is right, and,—rendering your task of control still more difficult,—more susceptible to poetry, and what you term inspiration, than ever, you must try and infuse a little of Caroline's steady matter-of-fact into your poetry, instead of almost despising it, as so cold and disagreeable. Now, do not look so very sad and so very serious, love, and jump at the conclusion that I am displeased, because I speak seriously. I love your joyousness far too dearly to check it, or wish you to do so, especially in your own family ; but just as you have learned the necessity of, and evinced so well and so feelingly, control in emotions of sorrow, my Emmeline, so I am quite sure you will trust my experience, and practise control, even in the pleasant inspirations of poetry and joy."

Emmeline sat very quiet for several minutes ; she was just in that mood of extreme hilarity which renders control excessively difficult, and causes the least check upon it to be felt as harsh and unkind, and almost to bring tears. She was not too perfect to escape feeling all this, even though the person who had caused it was the mother she so dearly loved ; but she did not give way to it. A few minutes' hard struggle, and the

momentary temper was so conquered, that, with an even more than usually warm kiss, she promised to think quite seriously on all her mother said, and, an effect far more difficult, was just as joyous as before.

“I have made so many mistakes in my drawing, Mamma, I really do not think I can go on with it to-day; do let me help you, I will take such pains with my work, it shall be almost as neat as yours; and then, though my fingers are employed, at least I may go on talking.”

Mrs. Hamilton assented, telling her she might talk as much as she pleased, with one of those peculiar smiles of approval which ever made Emmeline’s heart throb, for they always told her, that the thoughts and feelings, and secret struggle with temper, which she imagined must be known only to herself, her mother by some mysterious power had discovered, and rewarded.

“Edward, what are you so deep in?—‘Fragments of Voyages and Travels’—I thought it was something much *deeper* than that by the deep attention you are giving it. You should dip in oceans, not in fragments of water, Ned.”

“I did not feel inclined for the exertion,” he replied, smiling.

“Do you know,” she continued, “when I first read that book, which I did merely because I had a lurking sort of affection for a handsome cousin of mine who was a sailor, I was so charmed with the tricks you all played in the cockpit, that I was seized with a violent desire to don a middy’s dress, and come after you; it would have made such a pretty story, too; but I did

not think Mamma and Papa would quite approve of it, so I desisted. Should I not make a very handsome boy, Edward?"

"So handsome," he replied, again smiling, "that I fear you would not have preserved your incognita half an hour, especially with those flowing curls."

"My dear Emmeline, do tell me, what has made you in this mood?" asked Ellen; "last week you were so sad, and the last three days you have been——"

"Wild enough to frighten you, Ellen; ah, if you did but know the reason."

"You had better satisfy her curiosity, Emmy," said Mrs. Hamilton, so meaningly, that Emmeline's ready mind instantly understood her. "Tell her all that did occur in that awful storm three days ago, as poetically and lengthily, as you like; no one shall interrupt you, if you will only be very careful not to exaggerate or alarm."

Edward gave up his seat to his cousin, and Emmeline launched at once into a most animated description of the storm and the shipwreck, and the rescue; cleverly contriving so to hide all names, as to elude the least suspicion of either the preserved or the preserver, having anything to do with herself, Ellen becoming so exceedingly interested, as to lose sight of the question which at first had struck her, what this could have to do with Emmeline's wild spirits.

"You do not mean to say it was his own father he saved?" she said, as her cousin paused a minute to take breath; "your tale is becoming so like a romance, Emmy, I hardly know how to believe it."

"I assure you it is quite true ; only imagine what my young hero's feelings must have been, and those of the family, to whom he gave back a husband and a father!"

"I should think them so intense, so sacred, as to be hardly joy at first, and scarcely possible to be imagined, even by your vivid fancy, Emmy."

"I don't know, Ellen, but I think I *can* imagine them ; you may shake your head, and look wise, but I will prove that I can by and by. But what do you think of my hero?"

"That I should like to know him, and admire him quite as much as you can desire—and who told you all this?"

"One of the principal actors in the scene."

"What! has your *penchant* for anything out of the common way reached Dartmouth, and Old Collins brought you the tale?"

"No," replied Emmeline, laughing ; "guess again."

"William Grey?"

"No."

"One of the rescued crew, who may know my Aunt?"

"Wrong again, Ellen."

"Then I cannot guess, Emmeline ; so pray tell me."

"You are very silly, Ellen ; were not Mr. Howard and Edward both at Dartmouth at the time? why did you not guess them? Not that I had it from either."

"Edward!" repeated Ellen, "did he know anything about it?"

"More than any one else, dearest," answered Mrs. Hamilton, cautiously, but fondly ; "put all Emmeline's strange tale together, and connect it with my happiness

the other morning, and I think, your own heart will explain the rest."

"More especially with this speaking witness," continued Emmeline, playfully putting back Edward's hair, that Ellen might see the scar. She understood it in a moment, and clasping her arms round her brother's neck, as he knelt by her, tried hard to prevent emotion, but could not, and burst into tears.

"Tears, my little Ellen; I said I would only be greeted with smiles," exclaimed a rich deep voice close beside her, and before she had time to fear his presence, she felt herself clasped with all a father's fondness in her uncle's arms; her head resting on his shoulder, and his warm kiss on her cheek.

"Edward!" was the only word she could speak.

"Do not fear for him, my dear Ellen; true repentance and a firm resolution to amend are all I ask, and if his future conduct really prove them the errors of his youth shall be forgotten, as if they had never been."

"And—and—"

"I know all you would say, my dear child. I did think there could be no excuse, no palliation, for your sin; but even if I still wish the temptation had been resisted, you have indeed suffered for it, more than the harshest judgment could desire; let it be forgotten as entirely and fully as it is forgiven."

In a very few minutes Ellen's composure was so fully restored, and her heavy dread so subsided, that the relief seemed to her almost a dream. Could it be possible that it was the relative she had pictured as so harsh and stern,

and pitiless to youthful error, who had drawn a chair close by her sofa, and caressingly holding her hand in his, and looking so kindly, so earnestly, in her altered face, was trying to amuse her by telling her so many entertaining things about Feroe and Mr. Morton, and his voyage home, and alluding to her brother's courage, and prudence, and skill, in such terms as almost brought the tears again! Mr. Hamilton was inexpressibly shocked at the change which mental and bodily suffering had wrought in his niece. There is always something peculiarly touching and appealing to the best emotions in youthful sorrow or suffering of any kind; and her trial had been such an aggravated one—combining such agonised remorse, for an act, which the harshest judgment, knowing all points of the case, could scarcely pronounce as other than involuntary, with the most heroic but perfectly unconscious self-sacrifice, and not only terror for her brother's fate, but an almost crushing sense of misery for his faults,—that the pallid face, and frame so delicately fragile, had still deeper claims for sympathy and cherishing than even when caused by ordinary illness. The loss of her unusually luxuriant hair, except the soft bands which shaded her face, visible under the pretty little lace cap, made her look much younger than she really was, and so delicately transparent had become her complexion, that the blue veins were clearly traceable on her forehead, and throat, and hands; the dark soft lash seemed longer than before, as it swept the pale cheek, the brow more pencilled, and the eye, whether in imagination from her friends knowing all she had endured, or in reality, was so

expressive of such deep quiet feeling, that the whole countenance was altered and so improved that it seemed as if the heavy sallow child was rapidly changing into one of those sweet, loveable, heart-attracting girls, who, without any actual beauty, can never be passed unnoticed.

At Ellen's earnest request, Mrs. Hamilton had, as soon as she was strong enough, read with her, morning and evening, the devotional exercises which were read below to the assembled family. Mrs. Hamilton soon perceived, and with no little pain, that Ellen shrunk from the idea of being well enough to rejoin them, in actual suffering. Here again was an effect of that same vivid imagination, of whose existence, until the late events, in one so quiet, seemingly so cold, Mrs. Hamilton had not the least idea of. Ellen had been so long accustomed to be silent as to her feelings, in fact, carefully to conceal them, that much as she might wish and intend to be unreserved, her aunt feared it would cause her some difficulty to be so, and she could not hope to succeed in controlling imagination unless she were. That night, however, Ellen's unreserved confidence gave her hope. When the devotional exercises, in which she had joined with even more than usual earnestness and fervour, were concluded, she said, with almost Emmeline's confidence, as she laid her hand on her aunt's,

"I am so very, very happy to-night, dear Aunt, that I am afraid I do not think enough of what is past. I did so dread my uncle's return—so tremble at what his sentence would be on Edward and myself, that even

your kindness would not remove the weight ; and now, that I have found it all so groundless, and he is so kind—so indulgent, I am so relieved, that I fear I must have thought more of his anger than the anger of God. My sin remains the same in His sight, though you and Uncle Hamilton have so fully forgiven it, and—and—I do not think I ought to feel so happy.”

“Indeed, my dear Ellen, I think you may. Our heavenly Father is still more merciful than man, as Mr. Howard so clearly proved to you, in the long conversation you had with him. We know, by His Holy Word, that all He asks is sincere repentance for sin, and a firm conviction that in Him only we are made sufficiently righteous for our penitence to be accepted. I believe, Ellen, that His forgiveness was yours, long before I could give you mine, for He could read your heart, and saw the reason of your silence, and all the remorse and suffering, which, from the appearances against you, I might not even guess ; and that, in His compassionating love and pity, He permitted your increased trial ; ordaining even the failure of the relief to Edward, to convince you, that, not even in such a fearful case as yours, might error, however involuntary, prosper. I can trace His loving providence even in the fact of your finding one more note than you wanted, that discovery might thence come, which, without such a seeming chance, was, humanly speaking, impossible. He has shown compassion and love for you and Edward, in the very sufferings He ordained. So do not check your returning happiness, fearing it must be unacceptable to Him. Try to trace all things, either

of joy or sorrow, to Him. Associate Him with your every thought, and believe me, my own Ellen, your very happiness will both draw you nearer to Him, and be an acceptable offering in his sight."

Ellen listened eagerly, gratefully; she felt as if, with every word Mrs. Hamilton said, the film of doubt and vague fancies was dissolving from her mind, and, after a short pause, she said—

"Then you do not think, Aunt Emmeline, my inability to pray for so long a time, was a proof that God had utterly forsaken me? It made me still more wretched, for I thought it was a sure sign that I was so irredeemably wicked, He had left me to the devices of my own heart, and would never love or have mercy on me again. Even after you had quite forgiven me, and proved to me my promise was a mistaken one and not binding, I still felt the difficulty to pray, and it was so painful."

"Such inability is very often so entirely physical, my dear Ellen, that we must not think too much about it. Our simple duty is to persevere, however little satisfactory our devotions; and put our firm trust in our heavenly Father, that He will heal us, and permit His countenance so to shine upon us again, as to derive *comfort* from our prayers. Your inability before your illness was the natural consequence of Mr. Howard's severe representations, which he has since assured me, he never would have used, if he could have had the least idea of the cause of your silence. You, my poor child, were suffering too much, from a complete chaos of conflicting feelings and duties to be able to realize this;

and I am not at all astonished, that when you most yearned for the comfort of prayer and trust, the thought that by your silence you were failing in your duty to me and so disobeying God, should utterly have prevented it. Since your severe illness the inability has been entirely physical. As strength and peace return, you will regain the power, and realize all its comfort. Try, and under all feelings trust in and love God, and do not be too much elated, when you can think seriously and pray joyfully, nor too desponding when both fail you. In our present state, *physical* causes alone, so often occasion these differences of feeling in hours of devotion, that if we thought too much about them, we should constantly think wrong, and be very miserable. Try and prove your desire to love and serve God, in your *daily conduct* and *secret thoughts*, my Ellen, and you will be able to judge of your spiritual improvement by *action* and *feeling*, far more truly and justly than by the mood in which you pray."

The earnestness of truth and feeling was always so impressed on Mrs. Hamilton's manner, whenever she addressed her youthful charge, that her simplest word had weight. Happy indeed is it when youth—that season of bewildering doubt and question, and vivid, often mistaken fancies, and too impetuous feeling—has the rich blessing of such affectionate counsels, such a friend. Why will not woman rise superior to the petty employments and feelings too often alone attributed to her, and endeavour to fit herself for such thrice blessed mission; and by sympathy with young enjoyments—young hopes—young feelings, so attract young affec-

tions, that similar counsels, similar experiences, may so help—and guide, that the restless mind and eager heart quiesce into all the calm, deep, beautiful characteristics, which so shine forth in the true English wife—true English mother!

A fortnight after Mr. Hamilton's arrival, Ellen was well enough to go down stairs for part of the day, and even to read and write a little. She was so very anxious to recommence her studies, which for so many months had been so painfully neglected, that it was a great trial to her, to find her head was not yet strong enough for the necessary application. There were many, very many privations and trials, attendant on convalescence after so severe an illness, known only to Ellen's own heart, and to her aunt's quick sympathy; and she very quickly learned in them the meaning of Mrs. Hamilton's words regarding religion in conduct and feeling, as well as in prayer. She tried never to murmur, or dwell on the wish for pleasures which were denied her, but to think only on the many blessings which surrounded her. It was not an easy task so to conquer natural feeling, especially as the trial and its conquest was often known only to herself; but the earnest wish, indeed, to become holy in daily conduct, as well as in daily prayer, never left her mind, and so enabled her at length fully to obtain it.

If Mrs. Hamilton had wanted evidence of her husband's public as well as domestic worth, she would have had it fully now. His danger and his preservation once known, letters of regard and congratulation poured upon him, and Montrose Grahame made a journey down to

Oakwood expressly to welcome back and express his individual gratitude for his friend's safety to his youthful preserver. But Edward so shrunk from praise or admiration, that his uncle, rejoicing at the feeling, would not press him, as he had first intended, to accompany him to Oxford, where he went to see his sons. Percy rated him soundly in a letter for not coming. Herbert seemed, as if he could only think of his father's danger, and thank God for his safety, and for permitting Edward to be the means. So great was the desire of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton to reassemble all their happy family once more, before Edward left them, that the young men made an exception to their general rule, and promised to spend Easter week at home. It was early in March, and anticipated by the home party with the greatest delight.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RICH AND THE POOR.

“WE have had such a delightful excursion, Mamma. Ellen, how I do wish you could have been with us!” joyously exclaimed Emmeline, as she ran into the usual sitting-room, one of those lovely afternoons, that, the first days of March so often bring, promising spring long before she really comes. “It is such a picturesque cottage, and Dame Collins and Susan, and a host of little ones, look so nice, and so clean, and so pretty, and happy; it does one’s heart good to look at them.”

“Are you sure you cannot find another adjective to apply to them, Emmy? You have heaped so many together, that it is a pity you cannot find a few more.”

“But they really do look so comfortable, and are so grateful for all you and Papa have done for them: Emmeline’s description, for once, is not too flowing,” rejoined the quieter Caroline, who had followed her sister into the room.

“And were they pleased with your visit?” asked Ellen.

“Oh, delighted! particularly at our making their pretty little parlour our dining-room, and remaining so

long with them, that they could show us all their comforts and conveniences, without any bustle."

"Mrs. Collins is really a sensible woman. Do you not think so, Mamma?" inquired Caroline.

"Yes, my dear. She has brought up her own large family and her poor orphan grandchildren so admirably, in the midst of their extreme poverty, and bears such a name for kindness, amongst her still poorer neighbours, that I truly respect and admire her. She is quite one of those in whom I have often told you some of the very loftiest virtues are to be found; and yet to see her, as she trudges about in her homely humble fashion, never dreaming she is doing or has done anything remarkable in her hard-working life, who would suspect it?"

"Only look, Ellen, how beautifully our collection will be increased," continued Emmeline, who just at that moment was only alive to pleasure, not to contemplation, even of goodness, in which she much delighted, and pouring into her cousin's lap a basket of beautiful shells and other marine treasures. "Papa has just given us a new cabinet in time, though he only thought of it as a place for his Feroe curiosities. To think of his remembering our tastes even there!"

"But where did you get these from?"

"Why, the children were playing with some, which were so perfect, I could not help admiring them, and Mrs. Collins was in a bustle of pleasure that I liked anything so trifling, because she could gratify me, and she made me take all these, adding, that her good man would be sure to look out for some more for us;

for when I told her, they not only pleased me, but my poor invalid cousin, who was Edward's sister, you should have seen how her eyes sparkled."

"Oh, you have quite won the dame's heart, Emmy!" said Miss Harcourt. "What with talking to her and to Susan, and playing with every one of the children, and making them tell you all their plays and their schooling, and then gathering you a nosegay, telling them it should adorn your room at home!"

"And so it shall," gaily interrupted Emmeline; "I desired Robert to put them in water directly, for they were very pretty, and I like them better than the best bouquet from our greenhouse."

"I do not quite agree with you, Emmeline," said Caroline, smiling.

"Not you, Lina, who ever thought you would? by-the-by, I never saw you so agreeable and natural in a poor man's cottage in my life. What were you saying to Dame Collins? actually holding her hand, and something very bright shining in your eye."

"Dear Emmy, do not run on so," whispered Ellen, as she noticed Caroline's cheek crimson. Emmeline was at her side in a moment, with an arm round her neck.

"Caroline, dear, forgive me. I did not mean to tease you; only it was unusual, was it not?"

"I was trying to tell Mrs. Collins all I thought of her husband's share in saving our dear father, Emmy. I forgot all of folly and pride then."

“You are very seldom proud now, dearest Lina, and I was the foolish one not to have guessed what you were saying, without tormenting you. Mamma, do you know I have such an admirable plan in my head !”

“First tell Mamma,” interrupted Caroline, that William Gray has chosen to be a partner with Collins in the more extended fishing and boating business, which Papa has secured them, instead of entering into business by himself ; this has been settled since you were there, I think.”

“Yes, my dear, I did not know it ; but Mrs. Collins must like it, for she regretted very much that her sons were all scattered in different trades, and her little grandson, whose taste pointed to the sea, not old enough to go out with his grandfather.”

“But only listen to my plan, Mamma, dear ! William Gray and Susan Collins cannot possibly see much of each other, without falling in love ; and they will make such an industrious pretty couple, and Papa will give them a cottage to themselves, and I will go to their wedding !”

“Just such a plan as I should expect from your giddy brain, Emmy. But how do you know that Gray has any desire for a wife ?”

“Oh, because Edward said he could not help remarking, even in the midst of that awful scene, how mournfully he said, he would bear a hand, for he had neither mother, sister, nor wife to pipe for him ; now if he married Susan, he would have a very pretty wife to lament him !”

“Poor Susan, I fancy she would rather not become his wife, if it be only to mourn for him, Emmy; rather a novel reason for a marriage, certainly.”

“Oh, but Mamma dear! you know that I don't mean exactly and only that; somebody to be interested for him, and love him. No one can be happy without that.”

“Susan was telling me, Mamma, how thankful she is to you, for finding her and her sister employment, that they might be able to help the family,” rejoined Caroline. “I was quite pleased with her manner of speaking, and she blushed so prettily when Miss Harcourt praised the extreme neatness of her work.”

“Ah, Mamma, if you could but hear all they say of you!” again burst forth Emmeline, who it seemed could not be quiet, going from one subject to another with the same eager zest; “if you had but heard the old dame tell her astonishment and her pride, when she saw you enter their former miserable hut, and sitting down on an old sea-chest, invite her to tell, and listened to all her troubles, just as if you had been her equal, and left such comfort and such hope behind you, as had not been theirs for many a long day. She actually cried when she spoke, and so did I, because she spoke so of *my* mother. Oh, Mother, darling, how proud your children ought to be, to belong to one so beloved, so revered by the poor and the rich too, as you are!”

“Flatterer!” playfully answered Mrs. Hamilton, laying her hand caressingly on her child's mouth, as she knelt in sport before her. I will not hear such praise,

even from you. Believe me, darling, to win love and respect is so easy, so delightful, that there is no merit in obtaining it. We ought only to be thankful, when granted such a station and such influence as will permit extended usefulness and thought for others, without wronging our own."

"Yes; but, Mamma, many people do a great deal of good, but somehow or other they are not beloved."

"Because, perhaps, in their earnest desire to accomplish a great deal of good, they may not think quite enough of *little* things, and of the quick sympathy with other person's feelings, which is the real secret of winning love, and without which, sometimes even the greatest benefit is not valued as it ought to be. But did you see Old Collins himself?"

"He came in just before we left, and was so delighted to see Papa sitting in his inglenook, and only wished Edward had been there too."

"And where is your father?" asked Mrs. Hamilton. Did he not return with you?"

"Yes, but Edward wanted him, and they are in the library. I am quite certain there is some conspiracy between them; these long private interviews bode no good. I shall scold Papa for being so mysterious," said Emmeline.

"I rather think he will return the benefit, by scolding you for being so curious, Emmy. But here is Edward, so the interview to-day has not been very long."

"Has Papa been telling you Old Collins's naval news, Ned?" And, without waiting for an answer, she

continued, "that there is a fine seventy-four, the Sea Queen, preparing at Plymouth, to take the place of your old ship, and send back Sir Edward Manly and the Prince William. Now do not tell me you know this, Edward, and so disappoint me of the rare pleasure of telling news."

"I am sorry, Emmy, but I have known it for some weeks."

"And why did you not tell us?"

"Because I did not think it would particularly interest you, until I could add other intelligence to it."— He stopped, and looked alternately at Mrs. Hamilton and Ellen, as if asking the former whether he might proceed.

"And can you do so now, my dear Edward?" she replied, understanding him at once. "Ellen is too anxious for your advancement to expect, or wish you always to remain with her. Have you your appointment?"

"Yes, Aunt. My Uncle's letter to the Admiralty brought an answer at last. It came while he was out, and has been tantalizing me on the library-table for four hours. But it is all right. As the Prince William is returning, and I am so anxious to be still in active service, I am permitted, though somewhat against rule, to have a berth in the Sea Queen. I am sure it is all Uncle Hamilton's representations, and I am so thankful, so glad!"

"To leave us all again, you unfeeling savage!" exclaimed Emmeline, trying to laugh off the universal regret at this announcement. Ellen had looked

earnestly at her brother all the time he spoke, and then turned her face away, and a few quiet tears trickled down her cheek. Edward's arm was very quickly round her, and he whispered so many fond words and earnest assurances, united with his conviction that it would still be a whole month, perhaps more, before he should be summoned, as he had leave to remain with his family till the *Sea Queen* was ready to sail, that she rallied her spirits, and, after remaining very quiet for an hour, which was always her custom when she had had any struggle with herself, for the frame felt it,—though neither word nor sign betrayed it,—she was enabled fully to enjoy the grand delight of the evening—Percy and Herbert's arrival.

Easter week was indeed one of family joy and thankfulness, not only that they were all permitted once more to be together, but that the heavy clouds of sin and suffering had rolled away from their roof, and pleasure of the sweetest, most enduring, because most domestic kind, reigned triumphant. Percy's astonishment at Edward's growth, and the alteration from the handsome, joyous, rosy boy, to the pale, almost care-worn looking youth (for as long as Ellen bore such vivid traces, of all she had endured for his sake, and was, at it were, the constant presence of his errors, Edward tried in vain to recover his former spirits,) was most amusing.

"You are all deceived," he would declare; "one of these days you will discover you have been receiving a spurious Edward Fortescue, and that he is as much a pretender as his namesake, Charles Edward."

"Then he is no pretender, Percy. He is as truly the

son of Colonel Fortescue as *Prince* Charles was the grandson of James. Now don't begin a civil contest directly you come home ; you know you and I never do agree on historical subjects, and we never shall ; you hate Mary the great, great, great grandmother of Prince Charles, and I love her, so we must be always at war."

"Stuart-mad, as usual, Tiny ! but if that really be Edward, I wish he would just look a boy again, I don't like the change at all ; poor fellow !" he added to himself, "it is not much wonder."

The days passed much too quickly. Emmeline wished a dozen times that the days would be twenty-four instead of twelve hours long. The weather was so genial that it added to enjoyment, and allowed Ellen the delight, known only to such prisoners to sickness as she had been, of driving out for an hour or two at a time, and taking gentle walks on the terrace and in the garden. The young men were to return on the Monday, and on the Saturday previous a little excursion had been planned, to which the only drawback was that Ellen was not quite strong enough to accompany them : it was to visit Alice Seaton, whom we mentioned in a former chapter. Mr. Hamilton had succeeded in finding her brother lucrative employment with a lawyer in one of the neighbouring towns, a few miles from where she and her aunt now lived, enabling young Seaton to spend every Sabbath with them ; and Alice now kept a girl's school on her own account, and conducted herself so well as never to want scholars. It had been a long promise to go and see her, the drive from Oakwood being also most beautiful ; and as she and her brother

were both at home and at leisure the last day in Easter, it had been fixed upon for the visit. Percy was revelling in the idea of driving his mother and Miss Harcourt in a new barouche, and the rest of the party were to go on horseback. But a dispute had arisen who should stay with Ellen, and Edward insisted upon it, it was his right, and so they thought it was agreed.

"I wish, dear Percy, you would prevail on Edward to accompany you," pleaded Ellen, fancying herself alone with him, not seeing Herbert who was reading at a distant table.

"I wish, dear Ellen, you were going with us," he answered, mimicking her tone.

"But as I cannot make him go. It always makes him more unhappy when I am prevented any pleasure than it does myself; and I cannot bear to keep him by me four or five hours, when this lovely day, and the exercise of riding, and, above all, your company, Percy, would make him, at least for the time, almost his own merry self again."

"Thanks for the implied compliment, cousin mine," replied Percy, with a low bow.

"Reward me for it, and make him go."

"How can I be so ungallant, as to make him leave you alone?"

"Oh, I do not mind it, I assure you! I am well enough to amuse myself now; I cannot bear your all giving up so many pleasures, as you have done for me; I am so afraid of getting selfish."

"You selfish, Ellen! I wish you were a little more so; you are the most patient, devoted, little creature that

ever took woman's form. You have made me reproach myself enough, I can tell you, and I owe you a grudge for doing so."

"Dear Percy, what can you mean? If you knew how hard I find it to be patient sometimes, you would not praise me."

"I mean that the last time I was at home, I was blind and cruel, and added to your sufferings by my uncalled-for harshness, and never had an opportunity till this moment to say, now grieved I was—when the truth was known."

"Pray do not say anything about it, dear Percy," entreated his cousin, the tears starting to her eyes, as he kissed her warmly; "it was only just and natural you should have felt indignant with me, for causing Aunt Emmeline so much misery, and allying all the enjoyment of your holidays. I am sure you need not reproach yourself;—but will you make Edward go?"

"If it really will oblige you, Ellen; but I do not half like it." And he was going very reluctantly, when he met Herbert.

"You need not go, Percy," he said, smiling; "my ungracious cousin would not depute me as her messenger, but I made myself such, and so successfully that Edward will go, Ellen."

"Dear Herbert, how can I thank you enough! he will be so much happier with you all."

"Not with me," said Herbert, archly, "for I remain in his place."

"You!" repeated Ellen, surprised; "indeed, dear Herbert, it must not be. I shall do very well alone."

“Ungracious still, Ellen ! what if I have been looking all the morning for some excuse to stay at home without owing to my mother the truth—that I do not feel to-day quite equal to riding ? If your looks were as ungracious as your words, I would run away from you into my own room ; but as they are rather more gratifying to my self-love, we will send them all away, and enjoy our own quiet pleasures and your little drive together, Lell.”

Whatever Ellen might have said to convince him she could be happy alone, the beaming look of pleasure on her countenance satisfied all parties as to the excellence of this arrangement ; and happy, indeed, the day was. Herbert seemed to understand her unexpressed feelings so fully ; and that always makes the charm of conversation, whatever its subject. We do not require the *expression in words* of sympathy,—it is an indescribable something that betrays its existence. Favorite authors—and Herbert was almost surprised at Ellen’s dawning taste and judgment in literature—the delights of Nature after a long confinement, as if every flower were more sweet, every bit of landscape, or wood, or water more beautiful, and the many holy thoughts and pure joys springing from such feelings, were all discussed, either cosily in their sitting-room, or in their ramble in the garden ; and after Ellen’s early dinner, which Herbert shared with her as lunch, she proposed what she knew he would like, that her drive should be to Greville Manor, and they might spend a full hour with their friends, and yet be back in time. Herbert assented gladly ; and the warm welcome they received, Mrs.

Greville's kind care of Ellen, and Mary's eager chat with her and Herbert, and the number of things they seemed to find to talk about, made the hour literally fly; but Herbert, enjoyable as it was, did not forget his charge, and drove her back to Oakwood, while the sun still shone bright and warmly: and when the party returned, which they did only just in time to dress for dinner, and in the wildest spirits, the balance of pleasure at home and abroad, would certainly have been found quite equal.

Ellen still continued quietly to lie down in her own room while the family were at dinner, for she was then sufficiently refreshed to join them for a few hours in the evening. Percy and Emmeline, at dinner that day, kept up such a fire of wit and mirth, that it was somewhat difficult for any one else to edge in a word, though Edward and Caroline did sometimes contrive to bring a whole battery against themselves. Just as the dessert was placed on the table, however, sounds of rural music in the distance, advancing nearer and nearer, caused Percy to pause in his wild sallies, and spring with Edward to the window, and their exclamations soon compelled all the party to follow their example, and send for Ellen to see the unexpected sight too. Banners and pennons floated in the sunshine, and the greater part of the nautical inhabitants of Dartmouth were marshalled in goodly array beside them, headed by Captain Harvey and his crew, with Old Collins in the midst of them; they were all attired in the new clothing which Mr. Hamilton had presented to them; and a fine picture, Percy declared Old Collins's head

would make, with his weather-beaten, honest-speaking face, the very peculiar curls in which his really yellow hair was twisted, and the quid of tobacco, from which even, on this grand occasion, he could not relieve his mouth and cheek. A band of young men and girls surrounded the first banner, which, adorned with large bunches of primroses and violets up the staff, bore the words "Hamilton and Benevolence;" and amongst them Emmeline speedily recognized William Grey and Susan Collins, walking side by side, she looking down and smiling, and he so earnestly talking, that she whispered to her mother with the greatest glee, that her plan would take place after all. Then came a band of sturdy fishermen, chums and messmates of Collins, and then a band of boys and girls, from all Mr. Hamilton's own village schools, decked in their holiday attire, and holding in their hands tasteful garlands of all the spring flowers they could muster, and bearing two large banners, one with the words, "Fortescue for ever! All hail to British sailors;" and the other, a representation of the scene on the beach that eventful night, and the sinking vessel in the distance. The workmanship was rude indeed, but the effect so strikingly descriptive, that Mrs. Hamilton actually shuddered as she gazed, and grasped almost unconsciously the arm of her nephew as he stood by her, as if the magnitude of the danger, both to him and her husband, had never seemed so vivid before.

The windows of the dining-room had been thrown widely open, and as the rustic procession came in sight of those to whom their whole hearts tendered homage,

they halted ; the music ceased, and cheer on cheer resounded, till the very echoes of the old park, were startled out of their sleep, and sent the shout back again. Percy was amongst them in a moment, singling out Old Collins, whom he had tried repeatedly to see since his visit home, but never found him, and grasped and shook both his hands with the full vehemence of his character, pouring out the first words that chose to come, which better expressed his grateful feelings to the old man than the most studied speech. William Grey had already received substantial proofs of his gratitude, and so he had then only a kind nod, and a joke and look at the pretty, blushing Susan, which said a vast deal to both, and seemed as if he quite seconded Emmeline's plan,—mingling joyously with all,—he had bluff words, after their own hearts, for the men, smiles for the maidens, and such wild jokes for the children, as lost them all decorum, and made them shout aloud in their glee. Herbert seconded him quite as well as his quieter nature would allow. Edward had hung back, even when his name was called out lustily, as if he could not bear such homage.

“Join them, my boy ; their humble pleasure will not be half complete without you,” whispered Mrs. Hamilton earnestly, for she guessed his thoughts. “Remember only at this moment the large amount of happiness you have been permitted to call forth. Do not underrate a deed which all must admire, because of some sad thoughts ; rather resolve—as you can and have resolved—that the alloy shall be burned away, and the true metal alone re-

main, for my sake, to whom you have given such happiness, dear Edward."

The cloud dispersed from brow and heart in a moment; and he was in the midst of them, glad and buoyant almost as Percy, while the cheer which greeted him was almost overpowering to his sister, so much humble yet earnest feeling did it speak.

"You really should have given us timely notice of your intentions, my good friend," said Mr. Hamilton, warmly grasping Captain Harvey's hand. "At least we might have provided some substantial refreshment after your long march, as I fear we have but slender fare to offer you, though Ellis and Morris are busy already, I am happy to see."

And urged on by their own delight at this homage both to their master and his young preserver, who had become a complete idol amongst them, a long table was speedily laid in the servants' hall, covered with a variety of cold meats, and bread and cheese in abundance, and horns of cyder sparkling brightly beside each trencher. Fruit and cakes eagerly sought for by Emmeline, were by her distributed largely to the children, who remained variously grouped on the lawn, their glee at the treat heightened by the sweet and gentle manner of its bestowal.

Captain Harvey and his mate, Mr. Hamilton entertained himself, introducing them to his family, and especially Ellen, who, as the sister of Edward, found herself regarded with an interest that surprised her. Percy brought in Old Collins and Grey, both of whom had expressed such a wish to see any one so nearly

belonging to the brave young sailor, and her manner of receiving and returning their greeting, thanking them for the help they had so efficiently given her brother, made them still prouder and happier than before. After an hour and a half of thorough enjoyment—for their humble homage to worth and goodness had been received in the same spirit as it had been tendered—the procession marshalled itself in the same order as it had come; and rude as the music was, it sounded, as Emmeline declared, really beautiful, becoming fainter and fainter in the distance, and quite picturesque the effect of the banners and pennons, as they gleamed in and out the woody windings of the park, both music and procession softened in the mild, lovely twilight of the season.

CHAPTER XV.

A HOME SCENE, AND A PARTING.

“CAROLINE! Emmeline! come to the music-room for pity’s sake, and give me some delicious harmony,” exclaimed Percy, as soon as lights came, and the excitement of the last two hours had a little subsided. “Sit quiet, unless I have some amusement for my ears, I neither can nor will. I will have some music to lull my tired senses, and a waltz to excite my wearied frame.”

“And rest your limbs,” said Edward, drily.

“Don’t you know, master sailor, that when fatigued with one kind of exercise, the best rest is to take another? Now I have been standing up, playing the agreeable for two mortal hours, and I mean to have a waltz to bring back the stagnant circulation, and to be pleased for the fatigue of pleasing. Caroline and Emmeline, away with you both. Ellen, love, I will only ask you to come with us, and be pleased, too. Be off, Edward, no one shall be my cousin’s cavalier but myself; Herbert has had her all day. Take my Mother, if you like. Father, escort Miss Harcourt. That’s all right, as it always is, when I have my own way!”

His own way this time gave universal satisfaction. The talents of his sisters had been so cultivated, as a means of enhancing home-happiness, and increasing their own resources, that their musical evenings were always perfect enjoyment. Caroline, indeed, improved as she was, still retained her love of admiration sufficiently, to find still greater enjoyment in playing and singing when there were more to listen to her, than merely her own family, but the feeling, in the security and pure atmosphere of Oakwood, was kept under control, and she could find real pleasure in gratifying her brothers, though not quite to the same extent as Emmeline.

Percy, after comfortably settling Ellen, threw himself on the most luxurious chair he could find, stretched out his legs, placed his head in what he called the best position for listening and enjoying, and then called for duets on the harp and piano, single pieces on both, and song after song with the most merciless rapidity.

"Your sisters shall neither play nor sing to you any more," his mother, at length, laughingly said, "unless you rouse yourself from this disgracefully idle fit, and take your flute, and join them."

"Mother, you are lost to every sensation of mercy! after all my exertions, where am I to find breath?"

"You have had plenty of time to rest, you lazy fellow; letting your sisters fatigue themselves without remorse, and refusing your share," expostulated Edward. "Caroline, Emmeline, take my advice, and strike! don't play another note."

"You young rebel! teaching my sisters to revolt against the authority of such an important person as

myself. However, I will be condescending for once ; Tiny, there's a love, fetch me my flute."

It was so very close to him as he approached the piano, that his sister comically took his hand, and placed it on it, and two or three very pretty trios were performed, Percy declared with professional *éclat*.

"Now don't go, Percy, we want your voice in a song. Emmy sing that pretty one to your harp, that we wish Papa so much to hear ; Percy and I will join when wanted."

"Caroline, I have not the genius to sing at sight."

"Oh, you have often ! and the words will inspire you. Come, Herbert, we want you, too ; Edward's singing voice has deserted him, or I should enlist him also. Emmeline, what are you waiting for?"

"I cannot sing it, dear Caroline ; do not ask me," answered Emmeline, with a confusion and timidity, which at home were perfectly incomprehensible.

"Why, my little Emmy, I am quite curious to hear this new song ; do not disappoint me !" said her father, encouragingly.

"But after Caroline I cannot sing worth hearing," still pleaded Emmeline.

"My dear child, I never heard you make such a foolish excuse before ; your mother and myself never find any difference in the pleasure that listening to your music bestows, however one performer may be more naturally gifted than the other."

"I declare I must sing it, if it be only for the mystery of Tiny's refusing," said Percy, laughing. "Come, Bertie,—a MS. too—what a trial for one's nerves !"

The words, however, seemed sufficiently satisfactory for them readily to join in it. Emmeline still hesitated, almost painfully; but then gathering courage, she sat down to her harp, and, without any notes before her, played a few bars of one of those sweet thrilling Irish melodies, so suited to her instrument, and then commenced her song, the sweetness of her voice, and clearness of articulation atoning well for her deficiency in the power and brilliancy which characterized her sister. The words were exceedingly simple, but sung with deep feeling, and heart-appealing as they were, from the subject, we hope our readers will judge them as leniently as Emmeline's hearers.

EMMELINE'S SONG.

“Joy! joy! No more shall sorrow cloud
The home by Love enshrined;
The hearts in Care's cold fetters bow'd,
Now loveliest flowers have twined;
And dove-eyed Peace, with brooding wing,
Hath made her dwelling here;
And Hope and Love sweet incense fling,
To welcome and endear.

“He has return'd!—and starless night
No longer o'er us lowers.
Joy! joy! The future is all bright
With rosy-blossom'd hours.
What gladness with our Father fled!
What gladness he'll restore!
He has return'd, through peril's dread,
To bless his own once more!

“ Joy! joy! Oh! let our voices raise
Their glad and grateful lay,
And pour forth thanksgiving and praise
That grief hath passed away!
That he was snatch’d from storm and wave,
To dry pale Sorrow’s tear;
Restored! his home from woe to save—
Oh! welcome, Father, dear!”

Emmeline’s voice had at first trembled audibly, but seeming to derive courage from her sister and brother’s accompaniment, which, from their knowledge of music, was so beautifully modulated as to permit her sweet voice to be heard above all, and every word clearly distinguished, it became firmer and more earnest as she continued, till she forgot everything but the subject of her song. For full a minute there was silence as she ceased, but with an irresistible impulse Mr. Hamilton rose from his seat, and, as Emmeline left her harp, he clasped her in his arms.

“How can I thank you, my Emmeline, and all my children, for this fond greeting?” he exclaimed, with more emotion than he generally permitted to be visible. “Where could you find such appropriate words? What! tears, my little girl,” he added, as, completely overcome by the excitement of her song and her father’s praise, Emmeline most unexpectedly burst into tears. “What business have they to come, when you have given your parents nothing but pleasure? drive them away, love; what! still no smile? we must appeal to Mamma’s influence then, to explain and soothe them.”

“Where did you get them, Tiny? explain, for I am

positively faint from curiosity," comically demanded Percy, as Emmeline, breaking from her father, sat down on her favorite stool at her mother's feet, and hid her face in her lap. Mrs. Hamilton laid her hand caressingly on those soft curls, but, though she smiled, she did not speak.

"She will not tell, and you will none of you guess," said Caroline, laughing.

"You are in the secret, so out with it," said Edward.

"Not I; I am pledged to silence."

"Mother, dear, tell us for pity," pleaded Herbert.

"I can only guess, for I am not in her confidence, I assure you," she replied, in the same playful tone, and raising Emmeline's lowered head, she looked a moment in those conscious eyes. "Dictated by my Emmeline's affectionate little heart, they were found in this pretty shape, in the recesses of her own fanciful brain—is not that it, dearest?"

"There, Emmy, I knew Mamma would find it out, however we might be silent," said Caroline, triumphantly, as her sister's face was again concealed.

"Emmeline turned poet! Angels and ministers of grace defend me! I must hide my diminished head!" spouted Percy. "I thought at least I might retain my crown as the poet of the family, and to be rivalled by you—a light-footed fawn—wild gazelle—airy sprite—my especial Tiny! it is unbearable!"

"But we must all thank you, notwithstanding, Emmy," continued Herbert.

"Ah, but I have very little to do with it; the arrangement of the words to the air and the accompaniment are

Caroline's ; I could not have done that," said Emmeline ; her tears changed to her most joyous smiles.

Percy and his father turned directly to Caroline, the former with a Sir Charles Grandison's bow, the other with a most affectionate kiss ; and her mother looked at her with such an expression of gratified pleasure, that she could not help acknowledging to herself, such pure enjoyment was not to be found in the praise and admiration of strangers.

"Now, Emmeline, you have still a mystery to explain," said Edward. "Why did you not own your offspring, instead of by silence almost denying them?"

"And here I really cannot help you," answered Mrs. Hamilton ; "I cannot imagine why my Emmy should conceal a fact that could only give pleasure to us all."

"I think I know," said Ellen, timidly ; "Emmeline was thinking of all you said about controlling an impulse, and not always encouraging that which she termed inspiration, and perhaps she thought you did not quite approve of her writing, and so wished to conceal it."

"How could you guess so exactly, Ellen !" hastily answered Emmeline, forgetting, in her surprise at her cousin's penetration, that she betrayed herself.

"Because I should have felt the same," said Ellen, simply.

"Then I must have explained myself very badly, my dear children, or you must have both misunderstood me. I did not mean you to neglect such an enjoyment as poetry, but only to keep it in its proper sphere, and not allow it to take the place of resources, equally in-

tellectual, but which have and may still cost you more patience and labour. Poetry is a dangerous gift, my dear child ; but as long as you bring it to the common treasury of Home, and regard it merely as a recreation, only to be enjoyed when less attractive duties and studies are completed, you have my full permission to cultivate,—and try, by the study of our best authors, and whatever other help I can obtain for you, to improve yourself in it. No talent that is lent us, should be thrown aside, my Emmeline ; our only care must be not—by loving and pursuing it too intensely—to *abuse* it ; but I must not lecture you any longer, or Percy's patience will fail ; I see he has placed Miss Harcourt already at the piano, and Edward and Caroline, are ready for their waltz."

"And so I transform one Muse into another," exclaimed Percy, who, in his sister's absorbed attention, had neared her unobserved, and catching her round the waist, bore her to the upper end of the room, and a minute afterwards she was enjoying her waltz, with as much childish glee, as if neither poetry nor reflection could have anything to do with her.

"Why is poetry a dangerous gift, dear Aunt?" inquired Ellen, who had listened earnestly to all Mrs. Hamilton had said.

"Because, my love, it is very apt to excite and encourage an over-excess of feeling ; gives a habit of seeing things other than they really are, and engenders a species of romantic enthusiasm, most dangerous to the young, especially of our sex, whose feelings generally require control and repression, even when not joined to

poetry. To a well-regulated mind and temper, the danger is not of the same serious kind, as to the irregular, but merely consists, in the powerful temptation it too often presents to neglect duties and employments of more consequence for its indulgence. There is a species of fascination in the composition of even the most inferior poetry, which urges its pursuit, as giving so little trouble compared to the perseverance necessary for music and drawing, and such a vast amount of pleasure, that it is difficult to withdraw from it. This is still more strongly the case when the young first become conscious of the gift, as Emmeline is now. As she gets older, and her taste improves, she will not be satisfied with her efforts, unless they are very superior to the present, and the trouble she will take in correcting and improving, will remove a great deal of the too dangerous fascination attending it now ; still I am not anxious, while she retains her confidence in my affection and experience, and will so control the enjoyment, as not to permit its interference with her other more serious employments."

Ellen listened eagerly, and they continued conversing on many similar topics of interest and improvement, till the prayer-bell rung, and startled her into the recollection, that she had always retired nearly an hour before, and so had avoided entering the library, which she still quite shrunk from. Percy stopped his dance, which he had converted from a waltz into a most inspiring galop, the last importation he declared from Almack's ; Miss Harcourt closed the piano ; and Herbert paused in his conversation with his father. Nothing like

gloom ever marked the signal for the hour of devotion, but lighter pleasures always ceased a few minutes before, that they might better realize the more serious thought and service.

Mrs. Hamilton had never ceased to regret the disgrace she had inflicted on Ellen, in not permitting her to retain her own place with the family, at least in the hours of devotion, for it seemed more difficult to remove that impression than any of her other trials. Returning her niece's startled look with one of the sincerest affection, she said—

“You will remain with us to-night, my dear Ellen, will you not?”

“If you wish it, Aunt.”

“I do wish it, dearest, most earnestly. It is so long since I have had the happiness of seeing all my children round me in this solemn hour, and till you join us, I cannot feel quite sure that you have indeed forgiven an act of severity, which, could I but have suspected the truth, I should never have inflicted.”

“Forgiven!—you!” repeated Ellen, in utter astonishment, but rising instantly. “Aunt Emmeline, dear Aunt Emmeline, pray do not speak so; why did you not tell me your wish before? I would have conquered my own disinclination to enter the library weeks ago; indeed, indeed, it only seemed associated with my own guilt and misery.”

Mrs. Hamilton drew her arm fondly in hers, refusing for her the aid of either of the young men, who had all hastened towards her, and led her herself to the library, and to her usual place beside Emmeline. Many an eager, but respectful, look of affectionate admiration

was directed towards her by the assembled household, the greater part of whom had not seen her since the night of Edward's confession ; and the alteration in her appearance, the universal sympathy which her dangerous illness and its cause had called forth, even in the humblest and most ignorant—for it is the *heart*, not the *mind*, which is required for the comprehension of self-devotion—her very youth seeming to increase its magnitude, had inspired such a feeling of love, that could she have known it, would have prevented that painful sensation of shyness.

Many, many thoughts thronged her mind, as her uncle's impressive voice fell on her ear ; thoughts, which though they prevented her following the words of the prayers, and caused the tears, spite of every effort, to stream through her slender fingers, yet turned into thankfulness and praise, ere the service ceased, that fiery as the ordeal had been, she could still recognize a hand of love, and bless God, not only for the detection of her involuntary sin, but for every pang she had endured.

The next day was Sunday, bringing with it all sorts of quiet sober pleasures of its own, only alloyed by the thought that it was the last day of Percy's and Herbert's visit. The following morning they started for Oxford, Mr. Hamilton and Edward intending to accompany them part of the way, and then proceed to Ashburton, where the former had business, and then make a little tour through Plymouth home. The next day was so beautifully fine and genial, that Emmeline declared it would do Ellen the greatest possible good to go with her a few miles out of the park, to see a waterfall she had lately discovered, and which she had been longing

for Ellen to see, as Caroline would not admire it as much as it deserved. Miss Harcourt accompanied them, and on their return, its beauties were described to Mrs. Hamilton in the most animating strain: Emmeline declaring the air was more deliciously fresh, the trees more green, the sky more brilliantly blue, than they ever had been before; and that the very sound of the water, as it dashed down a black rock, and threw up spray, which the rays of the sun rendered so beautifully iridescent, as to seem like a succession of rainbows, was a whole volume of poetry in itself.

“And what extraordinary vision do you think that silly cousin of mine chose to fancy she saw coming down the Ashburton road, Mamma? Actually the apparitions of Papa and Edward. She will persist in the fancy. Miss Harcourt and I could only see two men on horse-back, at too great a distance for any identity to be recognized—but it must be their wraiths, if it be, for they had no idea of coming home to-day.”

“I am sure I was not mistaken, Emmeline,” said Ellen, (whom her aunt now observed looked agitated and flushed;) “and they were riding so fast, something very pressing must have recalled them.”

“And you are frightening yourself at shadows, my dear! but indeed I think you must be mistaken, for your uncle told me, he should be particularly engaged to-day,” said Mrs. Hamilton.

“She is not mistaken though,” exclaimed Caroline, who was standing at one of the windows; “for here they both are, true enough, and riding quite fast down the avenue. However, the mystery will soon be solved.”

Mr. Hamilton and Edward entered almost immediately afterwards, the latter evidently very much agitated, the former so tranquil and cheerful, that the momentary anxiety of his wife was calmed directly. He laughed at their bewilderment, and said that an important letter had reached him at Ashburton, summoning him to Plymouth, and so he thought he would just see how all was going on at Oakwood first. This was not at all a satisfactory reason from Mr. Hamilton. Edward evidently tried to answer Ellen's inquiries quietly, but he could not, and exclaiming, "You tell her, my dear Uncle! I cannot," ran out of the room. Mr. Hamilton instantly changed his jesting manner, so far as quietly and affectionately to seat his niece beside him, and tell her cautiously and kindly the real cause of their unexpected return. Orders had been sent to the *Sea Queen*, to sail much sooner than was expected, and therefore he had deferred his business, and returned with Edward directly.

"It is a trial, my dear Ellen, a very hard one just now, under all circumstances; but I am sure you will bear it with fortitude, for Edward's sake. The only drawback to his happiness in being again permitted to follow his profession, is the thought of the trial it will be to you."

"But when must we part? when must he leave Oakwood?" was all poor Ellen could ask; but in such a tone of quiet sorrow, her uncle could not for the moment reply.

"The *Sea Queen* leaves Plymouth, wind permitting, the end of the week, but,—Edward must be on board to-morrow."

A low cry escaped involuntarily from Ellen's lips, as she buried her face on the cushion of the couch where she was sitting, and an exclamation of surprise and regret broke from all. Mrs. Hamilton felt it almost as much as Ellen, from not only her own unspoken anxiety, as to whether indeed his home influence would save him from temptation in future, but that she could enter into every thought and feeling which in Ellen must so aggravate the actual parting,—always a sorrow in itself. After a few minutes Ellen raised her head, and, though her cheek was perfectly colourless, every tear was checked.

“Tell Edward he need not fear my weakness, dear Emmeline,” she said, trying hard to speak quite calmly. “Only beg him to come to me, that we may spend the little time we have together ; I will be as cheerful as himself.” And effort as it was, she kept her word ; so controlling sorrow, to enter into his naturally glad anticipations, that her brother felt as if he could not love, nor venerate her enough.

He was obliged to leave Oakwood (accompanied by his uncle) so early the next morning, that all his preparations had to be completed by that night. Ellis's activity, though she could not endure the idea of his going, speedily and satisfactorily settled that matter. Robert Langford, who had only regained his natural light-heartedness since Ellen had taken her usual place in the family, always declaring his carelessness had been the origin of all her misery, was another so active in his service, that Edward had only to give a hint of anything

he wanted, even if it could only be procured at some distance, and it was instantly obtained.

The hours wore on, the evening devotions were concluded, but still the family lingered in the library: so many things there seemed to say, for Mr. Hamilton and Miss Harcourt would not let the conversation flag, and Edward would talk and laugh as if he were only going from home for a few days. Midnight chimed, but still Mrs. Hamilton felt as if she could not give the signal for separation: but when one struck, there was a general start, and an unanimous declaration it could not be so late.

“I assure you it is,” Mrs. Hamilton cheerfully said; “and poor Edward will get no sleep, if we do not separate at once. He must certainly send you a box of artificial roses, for this unusual dissipation will bear all the natural ones away. Ellen, love, I must be cruel enough to resist that pleading look; remember, your full strength has not yet returned.”

She spoke kindly, but firmly, and there was a general move. Edward laughingly promised to send his cousins the very best box of rouge he could procure at Plymouth, and wished them good night as gaily as if they should meet as usual the next morning. Once only his voice faltered,—“Ellen, love, good night! My own sister, God in Heaven bless you!” were all he said, the last sentence escaping as if involuntarily, as if he had merely meant to say good night; and for more than a minute the brother and sister were clasped in each other’s arms. There were tears in Mrs. Hamilton’s eyes, and her

husband's were most unwontedly dim, for words were not needed to reveal to them the trial of that moment to those two young hearts. To Ellen's especially, for her lot was woman's—to *endure* until time should prove the reality of Edward's resolution, and mark him indeed the noble character his disposition so fondly promised. His was active service, the banishment of *thought* by *deed*. Breaking from her brother, and not daring to address either her aunt or uncle, lest her control should fail her too soon, Ellen hastened from the room.

“Go to her, Aunt Emmeline; oh, tell her I will never, never cause her to suffer again!” implored Edward, as soon as he could speak, and clasping his aunt's hand. “She has been struggling with herself the whole evening for my sake, and she will suffer for it to-morrow, unless she give it vent, and she will weep less painfully if you speak of comfort.”

“She will be better alone a little while, my dear boy; young as she is, she knows where to seek and find comfort, and her tears will flow more freely, conscious only of the presence and healing of her God. I shall not part from you now. Ellis wanted me for some directions about your things, and I will come to you in your room afterwards.”

Mrs. Hamilton knew the human heart well. When she went to Ellen, the paroxysm of natural sorrow had had vent, and her sympathy, her earnestly expressed conviction, that the trial of beholding error and remorse in one so beloved would not occur again, could bring comfort. The tears indeed might still have flowed the faster perhaps at the voice of kindness, but there was healing in them; and when her aunt left her to go to Edward,

she sent him a fond message that she was better, and in a few days would be happy, quite happy, for his sake.

It was late before Mrs. Hamilton quitted her nephew. We will not repeat all that passed between them, all that that fond, watchful relative so earnestly, so appealingly said. Not much in actual words of counsel had she ever before addressed him, feeling that that duty was better performed by Mr. Howard and his uncle. She had simply tried to influence him by the power of love, of forbearance, of sympathy with his remorse, and pity for his errors. In the wretchedness, the fearful anxiety, Ellen's danger and painful illness had occasioned herself individually, she had never spoken, or even let fall a sentence which could reproach him as the cause of all; and therefore, now that she did give her anxious affection words, they were so spoken, that her nephew never forgot them.

"I feel now," he had said, near the conclusion of their interview, "as if nothing could tempt me to err again; but oh, Aunt Emmeline, so I thought when I left home before; and its influences all left me as if they had never been. It may be so again, and—and—are there not such doomed wretches making all they love best most miserable?"

"Not, indeed, if they will take their home influences with them, my beloved boy. They deserted you before because, by the insidious sentiments of a most unhappy man, your religion was shaken, and you flung aside with scorn and misbelief the *only safety* for the young,—God's most Holy Word. The influences of your home are based on that alone, my Edward. They appear perhaps to the casual observer as only love, indulgence, peace,

and the joy springing from innocent and happy hearts ; but these are mere flowers springing from one immortal root. In God's Word alone is our safety ; there alone our strength and our joy ; and that may be yours still, my boy, though far away from us, and in a little world, with interests and temptations of its own. Take this little Bible ; it has been my constant companion for eighteen years, and to none but to yourself would I part with it. If you fear your better feelings failing, read it, be guided by it, if at first only for the sake of those you love ; I do not fear, but that very soon you will do so for its own sake. It bears a name within it which I think will ever keep it sacred in your care, as it has been in mine."

Edward opened it eagerly, "Charles Manvers !" he exclaimed ; "my own sailor-uncle, whose memory you have so taught me to love. It is indeed a spell, dear Aunt, and you shall never regret a gift so precious. But how came it yours ?"

"He came to me, just before starting for his last trip, entreating me to exchange Bibles with him, that in our most serious moments we might think of each other. It was such an unusually serious speech for him, that it seemed to thrill me with a vague foreboding, which was only too soon realized. I never saw him again ; and that little book indeed increased in value."

Her voice faltered, for even yet the memory of her brother was so dear to her that she could never speak of him without emotion. Edward reiterated his eager assurance that it should be equally valuable to him, adding—

"I have often had strange fancies about Uncle Charles,

Aunt, and longed for the command of a ship, to scour the coast of Algiers, and learn something more about the *Leander*. 'Somehow or other, I never can believe he was drowned, and yet to think of him as a slave is terrible.'

"And not likely, my dear boy; think of the lapse of years. But painful as it is, we must separate, Edward: I must not detain you from rest and sleep any longer. Only give me one promise,—if ever you are led into temptation and error again, and it may be—for our strongest resolutions sometimes fail us—write to me without the smallest hesitation, openly, freely; tell me all, and if you need aid, ask it, and I will give it; and, if it be possible, avert your uncle's displeasure. I have no fear that, in telling you this, I am weakening your resolution, but only to prevent one fault becoming many by concealment—from dread of anger, and therein the supposed impossibility of amendment. Remember, my beloved boy, you have a claim on me which no error nor fault can remove; as, under Providence, the preserver of my husband, I can *never* change the anxious love I bear you. You may indeed make me very miserable, but I know you will not: you *will* let me look on your noble deed with all the love, the admiration it deserves. Promise me that, under any difficulty or error, small or great, you will write to me as you would have done to your own beloved mother, and I shall have no fear remaining."

Edward did promise, but his heart was so full he could not restrain himself any longer, and as Mrs. Hamilton folded him to her heart, in a silent but tearful embrace, he wept on her shoulder like a child.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BIRTHDAY GIFT.

BRIGHTLY and placidly, as the course of their own beautiful river, did the days now pass to the inmates of Oakwood. Letters came from Edward so frequently, so happily, that hope would rest calmly, joyously, even on the thought of him. He never let an opportunity pass, writing always to Mrs. Hamilton (which he had scarcely ever done before), and enclosing his letters to Ellen open in hers. The tone, the frequency, were so changed from his last, that his family now wondered they had been so blind before, in not perceiving that his very seeming liveliness was unnatural and overstrained.

With Ellen, too, Mrs. Hamilton's anxious care was bringing in fair promise of success—the mistaken influences of her childhood, and their increased effect from a morbid imagination, produced from constant suffering, appearing indeed about to be wholly eradicated. Anxious to remove all sad associations connected with the library, Mrs. Hamilton, having determined herself to superintend Ellen's studies, passed long mornings in that ancient room with her, so delightfully, that it became associated only with the noble authors whose works, or extracts from whom, she read and revelled in, and

which filled her mind with such new thoughts, such expansive ideas, such calming and earnest truths, that she felt becoming to herself a new being. Lively and thoughtless as Emmeline she could not now indeed become, alike as their dispositions naturally were; but she was more quietly, enduringly happy than she had ever remembered herself.

There was only one alloy, one sad thought, that would intrude, causing a resolution, which none suspected; for, open as she had become, she could breathe it to none but Ellis, for she alone could assist her, though it required many, many persuasions and many assurances, that she never could be quite happy, unless it was accomplished, which could prevail on her to grant it. Ellen knew, felt, more and more each week, that she could not rest till she had laboured for, and obtained, and returned into her aunt's hands the full sum she had so involuntarily appropriated. The only means she could adopt demanded such a seemingly interminable period of self-denial, patience, and perseverance, that at first, as Ellis represented and magnified all connected with it, she felt as if indeed she could not nerve herself for the task, much as she desired to perform it; but prayer enabled her to face the idea, till it lost its most painful aspect, and three months after Edward's departure she commenced the undertaking, resolved that neither time nor difficulty should deter her from its accomplishment. What her plan was, and whether it succeeded, we may not here inform our readers. Should we be permitted to resume our History of the Hamilton Family, both will be revealed.

Greatly to Caroline's delight, the following October was fixed for them to leave Oakwood, and, after a pleasant tour, to make the long anticipated visit to London. There would then be three or four months quiet for her to have the benefit of masters, before she was introduced, and Mrs. Hamilton fondly hoped, that the last year's residence at home, fraught as it had been with so much of domestic trial, and displaying so many hopeful and admirable traits in Caroline's disposition, would have lessened the danger of the ordeal of admiration and gaiety which she so dreaded for her child—whether it had or not, a future page will disclose.

To Emmeline this arrangement was a source of extreme regret individually, in which Ellen now quite sympathised. But Emmeline had never forgotten her mother's gentle hint, that too great indulgence of regret or sorrow becomes selfishness, and she tried very hard to create some anticipation of pleasure, even in London. Ellen would not look to pleasure, but merely tried to think about—and so, when called upon, cheerfully to resign that which was now so intensely enjoyable—her studies with her aunt; and so benefit by them, as to give Miss Harcourt no trouble when she was again under her care; as she knew she and Emmeline must be, more than they had been yet, when Caroline's introduction, and their residence in London, would take Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton so much from domestic pursuits and pleasures, and, even when at home, compel them to be so frequently engrossed with a large circle of friends, and all the variety of claims on their attention and time, which a season in London includes.

It was again the 7th of June, and Ellen's birthday. Accustomed from the time she became an inmate of Oakwood to regard the anniversary of her birth in the same serious light as Mrs. Hamilton had taught her cousins—as a day of quiet reflection, as well as of thankfulness and joy, as one that closing and recommencing another year of their individual lives, taught them that they were becoming more and more responsible beings—it was not much wonder that Ellen the whole of that day should seem somewhat less cheerful than usual. She had indeed had many sources of thankfulness and joy during the past year, but a heart and mind like hers could not recall its principal event without a return of sorrow. Mrs. Hamilton would not notice her now unusual sadness until the evening, when perceiving her standing engrossed in thought beside one of the widely-opened windows, near which Caroline was watering some lovely flowers on the terrace, she gently approached her, and, putting her arm round her, said, fondly—

“You have thought quite seriously and quite long enough for to-day, my dear Ellen; I must not have any more such very silent meditations. That there is something to regret in the retrospect of the last year, I acknowledge, but you must not let it poison all the sources of thankfulness which it brings likewise.”

“It was not of my past conduct, I was thinking at this moment, Aunt Emmeline—it was—”

“What, love? tell me without reserve.”

“That I never, never can return in the smallest degree all I owe to you,” replied Ellen, with a sudden burst of emotion, most unusual to her controlled and

gentle character ; “ I never can do anything to evince how gratefully, how intensely I feel all the kindness, the goodness you have shown me from the first moment you took me to your home—an unhappy, neglected, ailing child, and this year more, more than ever. My own poor mother left me in my dangerous illness, and what have you not done to give me back not merely physical, but mental health ? Day and night you watched beside me, forgetting all the care, the misery, my conduct had caused you, only thinking, only seeking, to give me back to health and happiness. Oh, Aunt Emmeline, your very household can evince gratitude and love, in the performance of their respective duties—I can do nothing, never can. If I only could ! ”

“ Do you remember the fable of the lion and the mouse, my dear Ellen, and Miss Edgeworth’s still prettier story on the same subject ? ” replied Mrs. Hamilton, more affected than she chose to betray, though she drew her niece closer to her, and kissed her fondly. “ I hope I shall never be caught in a net, nor exposed to such horrors and danger as poor Madame de Fleury in the French Revolution ; but for all that, and unlikely as it seems now, my dear child, you may have many an opportunity to return all that you so gratefully feel you owe me. Do not let any such thought worry you ; but believe me, when I assure you that affection and confidence are the only return I require, united, as they are in you, with such an earnest desire, and such persevering efforts to become all your best friends can wish you.”

She was interrupted by the entrance of Emmeline, with a small parcel in her hand.

“Mamma, this has just arrived from Exeter for you ; with an apologising message from Mr. Bennet, saying it should have been here last night, as he promised, but he could not get the articles from London in time. I am so very curious as to what it possibly can be, that I would bring it to you myself.”

“Any other time I would punish your constant curiosity, Emmeline, by refusing to gratify it. I cannot do so now, however, for I should punish myself as well. I did want it most particularly this morning ; but I am glad it was not delayed till the day was quite over. Your Uncle and I did not forget your birthday, my dear Ellen, though it seemed so.” And opening the parcel as she spoke, a very pretty jewel-case appeared, containing the watch, cross, and all the other trinkets Ellen had placed in Mrs. Langford’s hands, and never had had the courage to inquire for, and the few her aunt had kept for her, but so prettily arranged and beautifully burnished, that she would scarcely have known them again.

“Did you never feel any curiosity as to the fate of your trinkets, my love, that you have never asked about them?”

“I knew they were in better hands than my own,” replied Ellen, with a quivering lip. “I felt I had no further right to them, after attempting to part with them.”

“I know there are some very painful associations connected with these trinkets, my dear Ellen, and, therefore, I would not return them to your own care, till I could add to them a birthday-gift,”—and, lifting the upper tray, she took out a gold chain, and a pair of

bracelets of chaste and beautiful workmanship—"that the sad memories of the one may be forgotten in the pleasant thoughts of the other. I have only one condition to make," she added, in an earnest lower tone, as Ellen tried to speak her thanks, but could only cling to her aunt's neck, and weep. "If ever again you are tempted to dispose of them, dearest, promise me to bring them to me, for my valuation first."

"You shall be put into fetters at once, Ellen," said Emmeline, joyously, as her cousin gave the required promise, so eagerly, that it was evident, she felt how much security dwelt in it. "Mamma, make her put them on; I want to see if she looks as interesting as Zenobia did in her golden chains."

"I think you might find a prettier simile, Emmeline," replied Mrs. Hamilton, smiling, as she granted her request, by throwing the chain round Ellen's neck, and fastening the bracelets on her wrists.

"So I can, and so I will," replied the lively girl, altering, without the smallest hesitation, the lines to suit her fancy—

"For thee, *rash girl*, no suppliant sues;
For thee may vengeance claim her dues;
Who, nurtured underneath our smile,
Repaid our cares with treacherous wile.

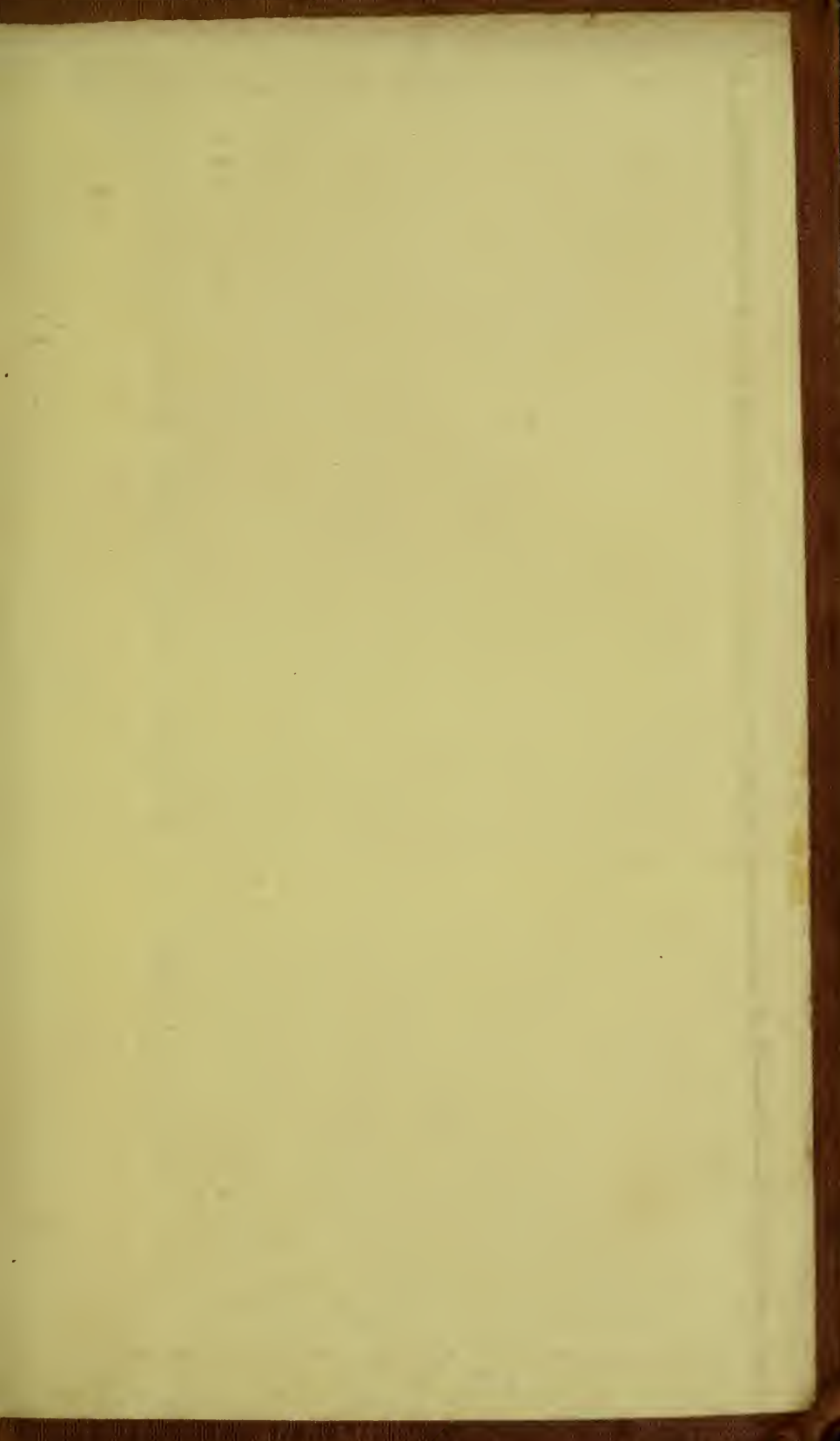
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Dishonouring thus thy loyal name,
Fetters and warders *thou must claim*.
The chain of gold was quick unstrung,
Its links on that *fair neck* were flung;
Then gently drew the glittering band,
And laid the clasp on Ellen's hand."

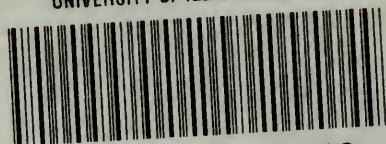
Here then we must bid farewell to Oakwood and its happy inmates. Should we have excited interest sufficient, for the wish to arise to follow them into the world, and mark if their Home Influences indeed bring the blessed effects they promise, if Mrs. Hamilton's anxious cares have indeed their reward on Earth, and what effect their respective Home Influences have on the Grahame and Greville families, whom we may have been accused of introducing, merely to leave unfinished, most gladly will we resume our narrative, and give all the information desired. We acknowledge that our task is not completed: we have only traced the Home Education of Mrs. Hamilton's own family. Its *effect* requires a further illustration, and as earnestly, as truthfully, as we have endeavoured to portray all the cares and anxieties of maternal love, so in the Greville and Grahame as well as the Hamilton families will we endeavour to portray—

A MOTHER'S RECOMPENCE.





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